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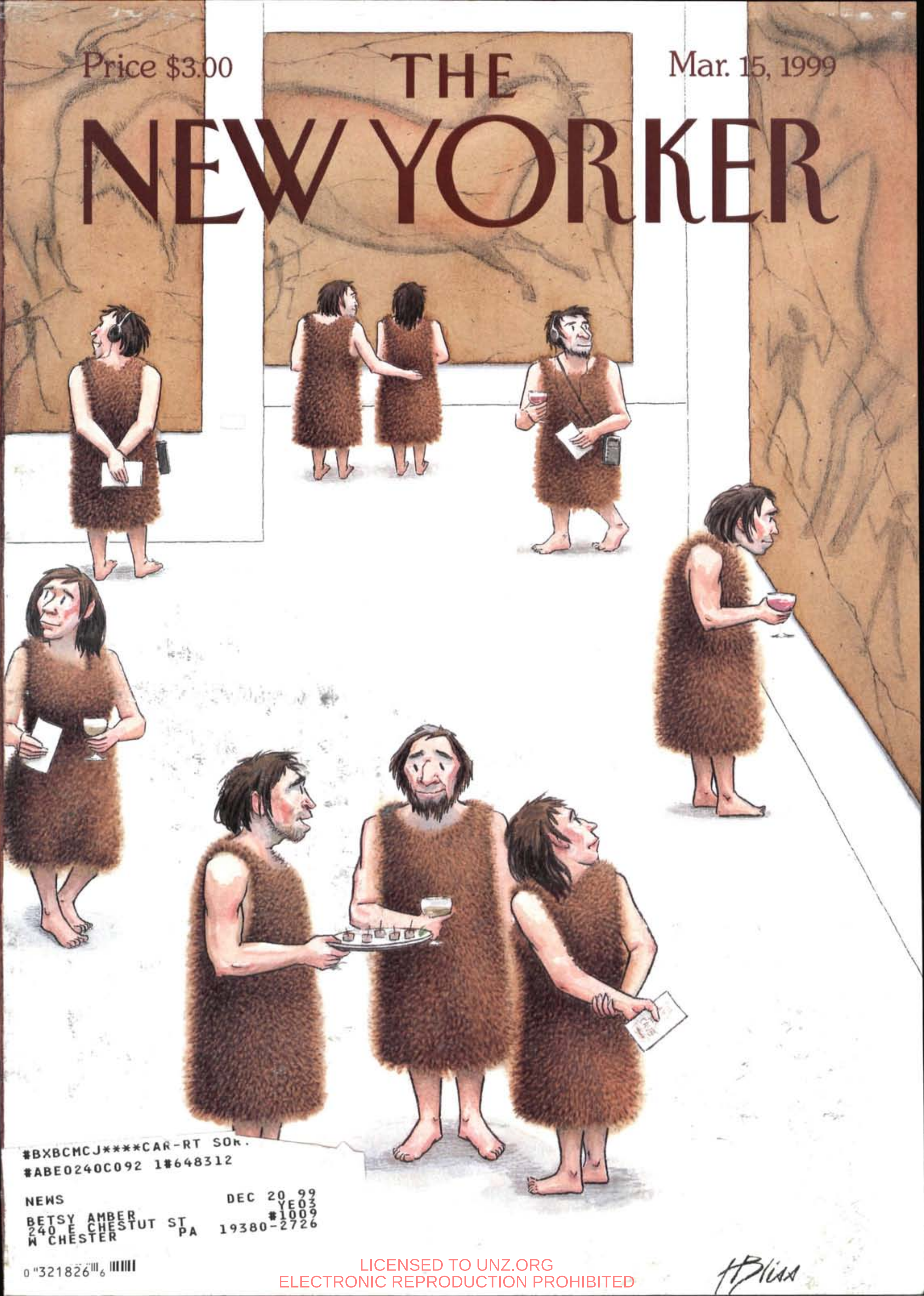
THE NEW YORKER

Mar. 15, 1999



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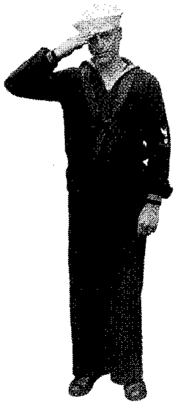

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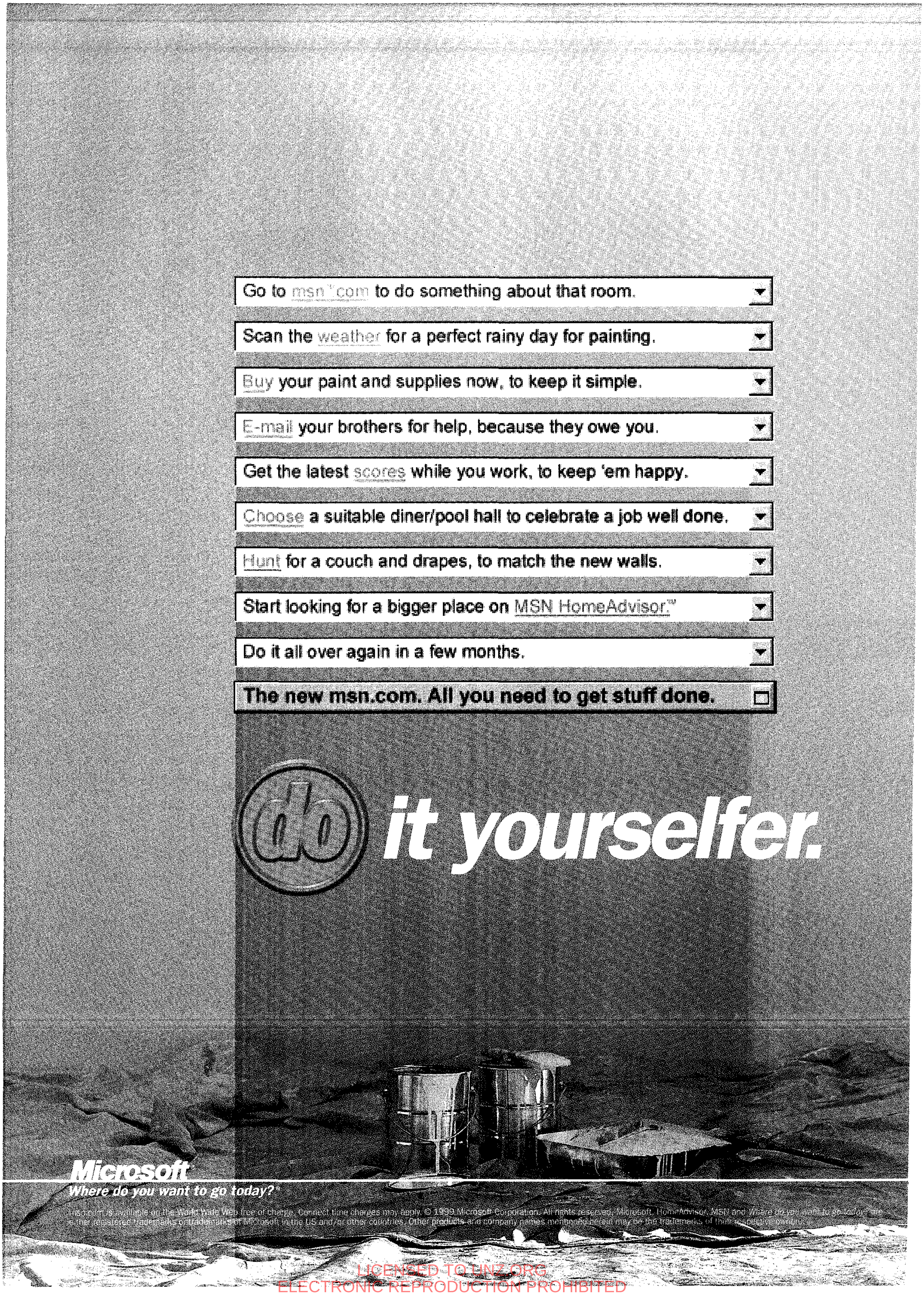

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DRAWINGS *Frank Cotham, Leo Cullum, Peter Steiner, Sam Gross, Mike Twohy, Bruce Eric Kaplan, Michael Maslin, Jack Ziegler, Robert Weber, Charles Barsotti*

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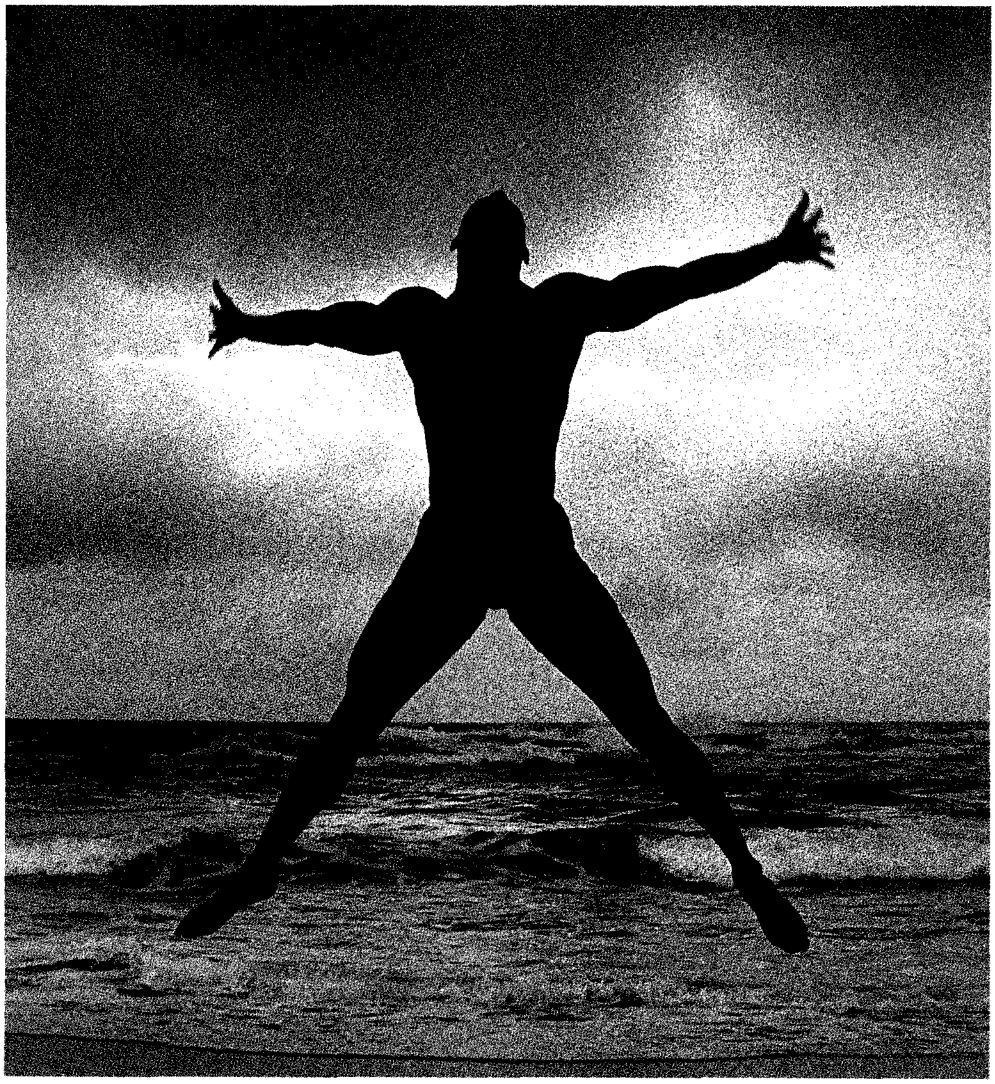
In a past life, I was Nostradamus.
Nothing, I mean nothing, surprises me.



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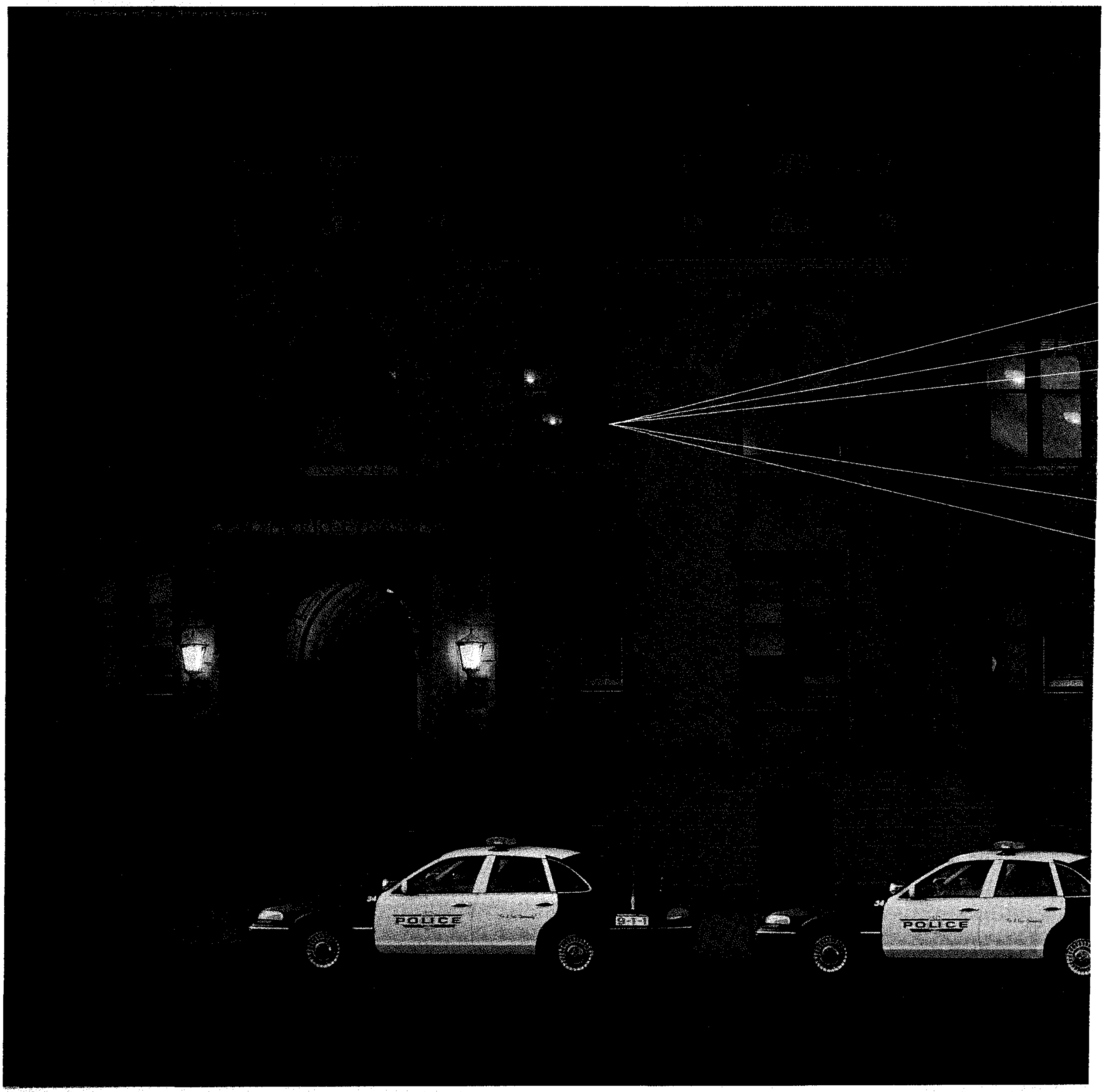

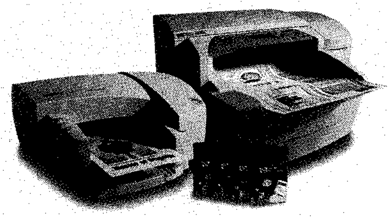

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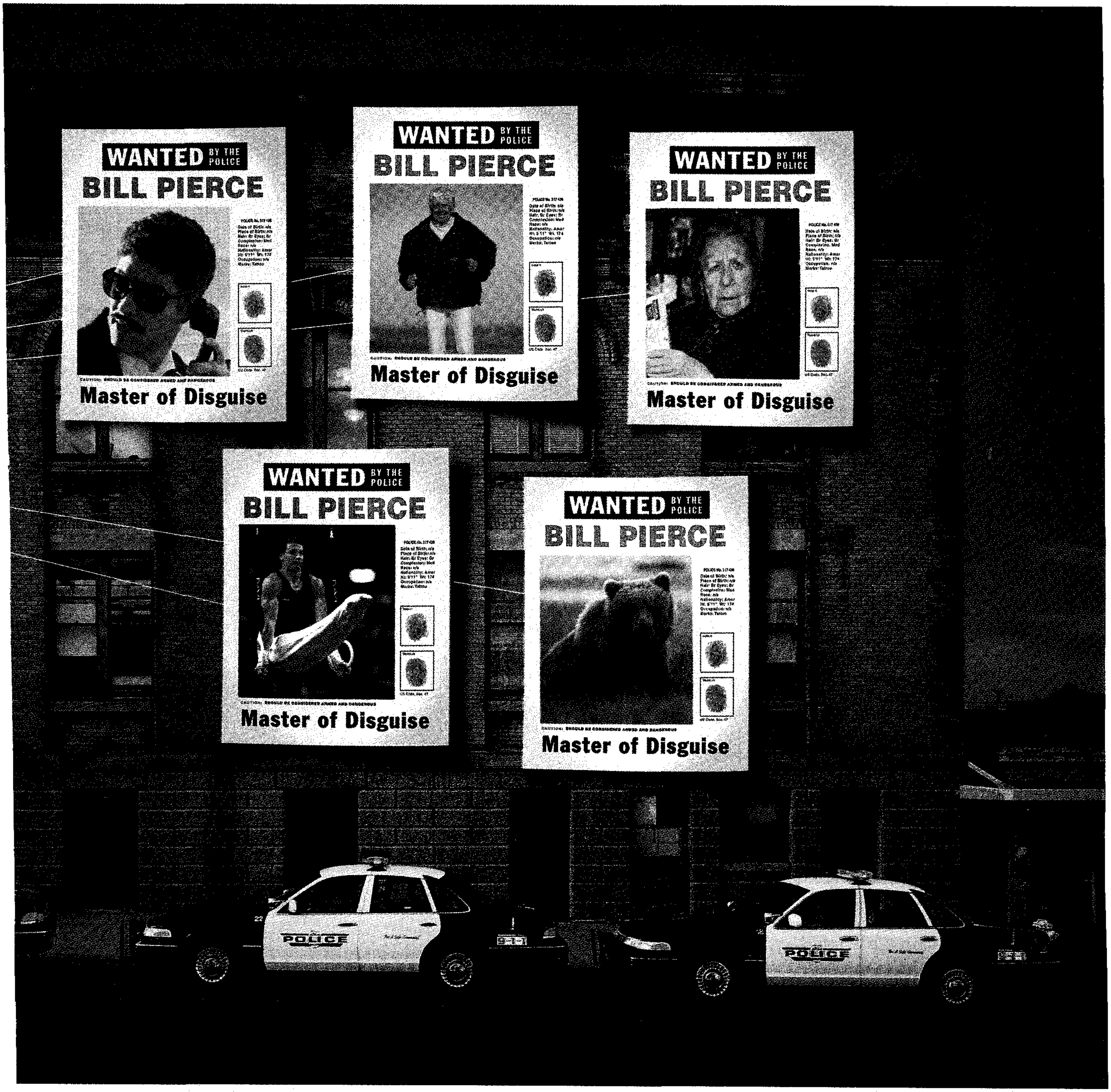
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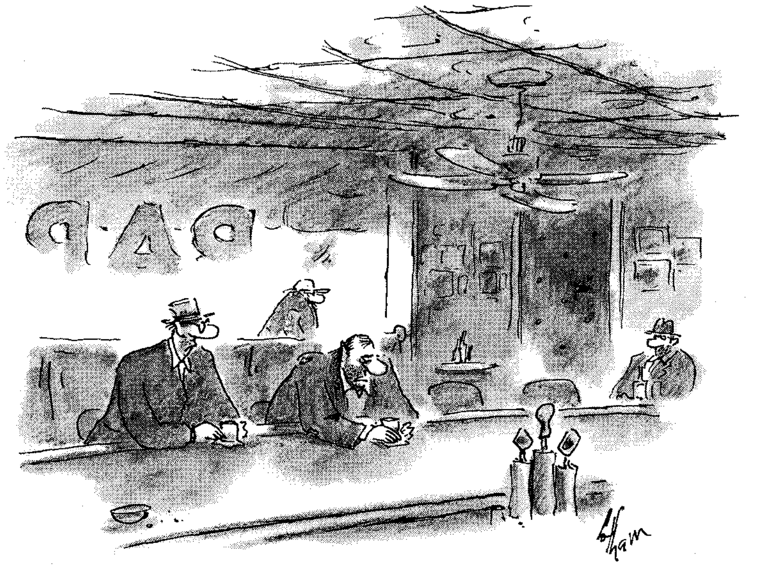

"I made a bid for the Senate, but this is as far as I got."

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THE MAIL

POLICING OURSELVES

The March 8th cover, showing a policeman using his own gun to shoot at human targets in a shooting gallery ("41 Shots 10¢," by Art Spiegelman), was a cheap shot, and a canard. To ridicule the radical reduction in crime in New York City and to portray those largely responsible for it as engaging in human target practice is a new low in dirty, destructive, and divisive politics.

ARTHUR GINSBERG
New York City

Police Commissioner Howard Safir has asked *The New Yorker* to apologize for the March 8th cover. The magazine has nothing to apologize for: the cover reflects the way many of us in New York have come to feel about the police. Not all police officers are bad, but the growing feeling among law-abiding New Yorkers is that good officers are becoming the exception that proves the rule. The Amadou Diallo tragedy was not an anomaly—it was the capper. I appreciate *The New Yorker's* stimulating a dialogue about police officers' perceptions of city residents and city residents' perceptions of the police.

PAMELA MATSUDA-DUNN
New York City

PLAYING CHICKEN

Calvin Trillin, in his article about a ticktacktoe-playing chicken (U.S. Journal, "The Chicken Vanishes," February 8th), might have mentioned a second bird that was once in residence at the Mott Street arcade in Chinatown: the Dancing Chicken. This chicken was trained at the same Skinner-inspired company, Animal Behavior Enterprises, as the ticktacktoe-playing chicken was. When the coins dropped into the Dancing Chicken's box, she would strut unabashedly onto her stage, high-stepping with a zany verve. The spirit of her performance evoked in this viewer both laughter and empathy, since, let's face it—we are all dancing chickens in one way or another.

MARGUERITE LAVIN
New York City

Mr. Trillin's obsession with the ticktacktoe chicken at the Mott Street arcade strongly suggests that he's a little punchy from playing too many games with caged birds. Mr. Samuel, the arcade owner, graciously gave the last chicken to a lovely lady in Massachusetts. "Willy" is now called Lilly. (In fact, all those poor winning "Willy"s that Trillin misses were females.) Her new caretaker had to remove a ring fastened around Lilly's leg and teach her how to eat, because all that Lilly knew how to do at first was peck at the walls. The game is over: there is nothing cute about a caged chicken playing ticktacktoe.

KAREN DAVIS
President
United Poultry Concerns, Inc.
Machipongo, Va.

FEED YOUR HEAD

Rebecca Mead's Talk of the Town story (The Creative Life, February 8th) on Damien Hirst's new work, a limited edition of Robert Sabbag's classic drug book, "Snowblind," with mirrors as the front and back covers, a fake credit card for a bookmark, and a rolled-up hundred-dollar bill, shows how derivative and overhyped Hirst's work is. Artists have been using drugs and their paraphernalia in art works for years. Reading about Hirst's cocaine book reminded me of the 1972 Jefferson Airplane album "Long John Silver." The record's jacket was designed so that, with a little folding, it formed a marijuana stash box. Hirst's work fails by comparison: not only is his book more expensive than the record, it lacks its own soundtrack.

STEPHEN PERSING
Wethersfield, Conn.

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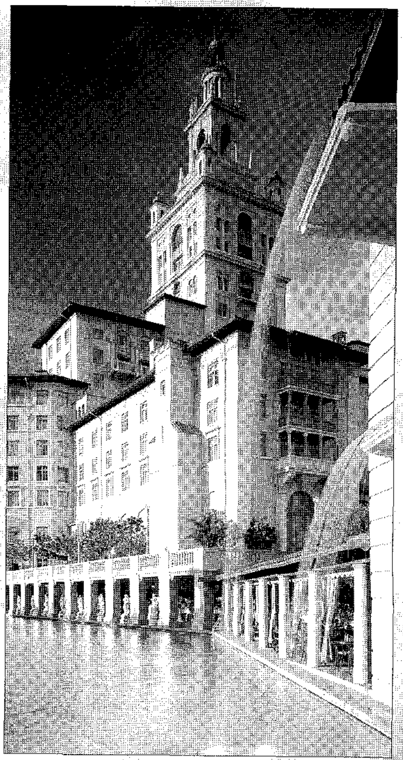

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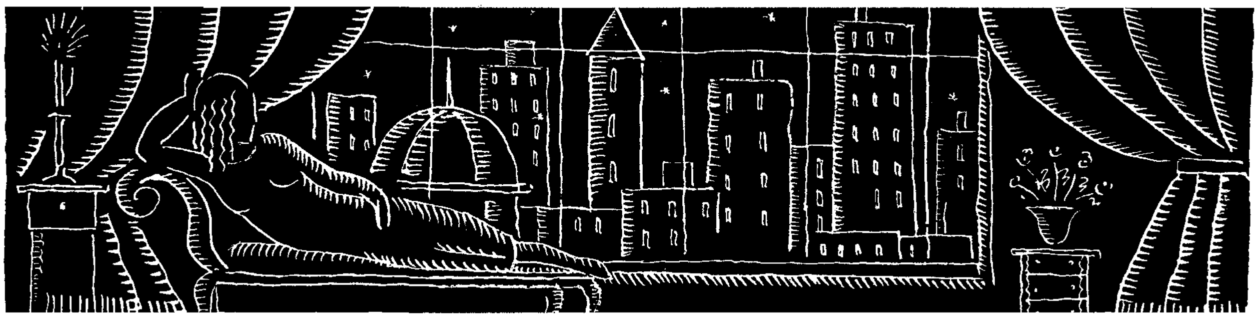

GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

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THE THEATRE

OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

(Please call the phone number listed with the theatre for timetables and ticket information.)

Betty's Summer Vacation—A summer share turns bad, in a new comedy by Christopher Durang. In previews through March 13. Opens March 14 at 7:30. (Playwrights Horizons, 416 W. 42nd St. 279-4200.)

Closer—Natasha Richardson leads the cast in the Royal National Theatre's production of a new play by Patrick Marber, which examines the tangled relationship of four friends. In previews. (Music Box, 239 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

Cowboys & Indians—Francis Parkman's account of his Oregon Trail expedition, in 1846, inspired this comic reinterpretation by Richard Maxwell and Jim Strahs. Previews March 11-12. Opens March 13 at 8. (Soho Rep, 46 Walker St. 334-0962.)

The Happy Prince—A puppet-and-masque show based on the Oscar Wilde story. With puppets by Bob Flanagan and Akira Yoshimura. Opens March 10 at 8. (Irish Repertory Theatre, 132 W. 22nd St. 727-2737.)

He Who Says Yes/He Who Says No—The National Asian American Theatre Company's staging of rarely performed companion works by Bertolt Brecht. In previews. (Connelly Theatre, 220 E. 4th St. For information about tickets, call 718-623-1672.)

The Lion in Winter—James Goldman's 1966 play stars Laurence Fishburne as Henry II and Stockard Channing as Eleanor of Aquitaine. Michael Mayer is the director. In previews. (Roundabout, Broadway at 45th St. 719-1300.)

Macbeth—Theatre for a New Audience's production of Shakespeare's tragedy. In previews through March 13. Opens March 14 at 6:30. (American Place Theatre, 111 W. 46th St. 239-6200.)

Premium Bob—The comedy duo otherwise known as David Latham and Paul Boocock have moved uptown for a brief run of their latest show, "Manhunt." In previews. (Kaufman, 534 W. 42nd St. 564-8038.)

Red—In Chay Yew's latest drama, an American writer revisits her native China during the Cultural Revolution. David Petrarca is the director. In previews. (Manhattan Theatre Club, at City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-1212.)

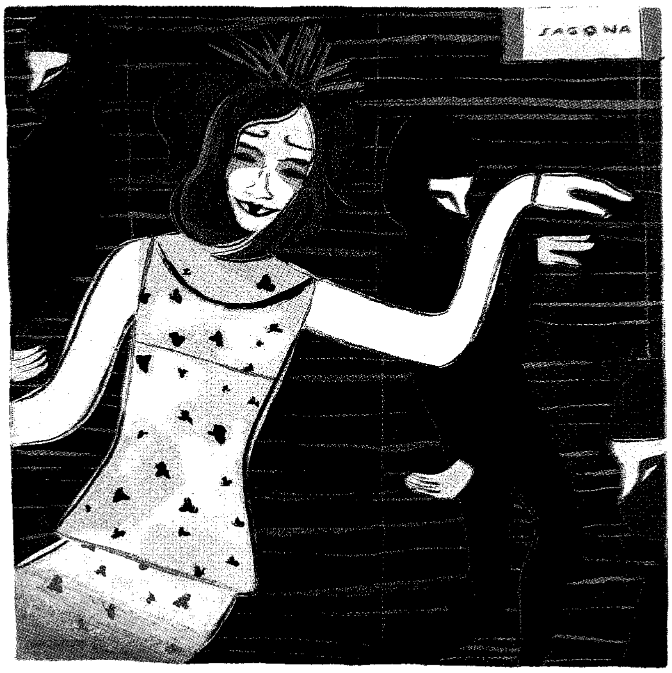
The Turn of the Screw—Jeffrey Hatcher's adaptation of the Henry James novella, directed by Melia Bensussen. In previews. (Primary Stages, 354 W. 45th St. 333-4052.)

Via Dolorosa—The playwright David Hare performs his new one-man play, inspired by a series of recent trips to Israel. Stephen Daldry is the director. In previews. (Booth, 222 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

The World of Ruth Draper—Patricia Norcia returns to Carnegie Hall with her interpretation of dramatic monologues by the early solo performer, whose career spanned the twenties through the fifties. One night only. March 10 at 8. (Weill Recital Hall, at Carnegie Hall. For tickets and information, call 769-4217.)

OPENED RECENTLY

Admissions—A group of university students who've come together to protest tuition hikes is torn apart by prejudice, in a drama by Tony Vellela. Directed by Austin Pendleton. (Blue Heron Arts Center, 121 E. 24th St. 332-0027. Closes March 28.)



The Bat Theatre Company's version of "Benten Kozo," a Kabuki play by Kawatake Mokuami.

Annie Get Your Gun—Bernadette Peters stars as the sharpshooter Annie Oakley, in Irving Berlin's 1946 musical. With Tom Wopat. Directed by Graciela Daniele. (Marquis, Broadway at 45th St. 307-4100.)

Ashes to Ashes—It has taken three years for Harold Pinter's latest short play to cross the Atlantic, but the wait has been worth it. An eerie state of hauntedness is dramatized in the character of Rebecca (the masterly British actress Lindsay Duncan), a nervy middle-class woman who is thrilled and appalled by images of Nazi Germany, images so alive to her that she exists in an altered reality. She tortures herself out of survivor guilt and also tortures her donnish partner, Devlin (invested with wry academic irony by David Strathairn), who is competing in vain with her ravishing figments. She has always carried the victim inside her; Pinter dares to show that she also carries the victimizer. Directed by Karel Reisz. (Reviewed in our issue of 2/22 & 3/1/99.) (Gramercy, 127 E. 23rd St. 777-4900.)

Band in Berlin—A musical about the popular German sextet the Comedian Harmonists, three of whom were Jewish, who were banned by the Nazis on the ground that they were bad for German morale. (Helen Hayes, 240 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

Beautiful Thing—Jonathan Harvey's 1993 drama, set in London, about two working-class boys who fall in love. (Cherry Lane, 38 Commerce St. 239-6200.)

Benten Kozo—Traditional Kabuki meets Jackie Chan in a delightful evening concocted by director Jim Simpson and his Bat Theatre Company. The work is based on Kawatake Mokuami's nineteenth-century play involving a princess, her missing fiancé, a master thief, and a priceless incense box; the company's hip updating of the script, along with Moe Schell's clever costumes, creates an ironic, funny, energetic production that (like many of the company's offerings in the past year) is well worth a trek to Tribeca. Angela Tweed, as the Chorus, is especially good. Runs in repertory with the company's revival of Mac Wellman's 1986 play "Cleveland." (Flea Theatre, 41 White St. 226-0051.)

Bright Lights Big City—A musical version of the Jay McInerney novel, with book, music, and lyrics by Paul Scott Goodman. Michael Greif ("Rent") is the director. (Reviewed in this issue.) (New York Theatre Workshop, 79 E. 4th St. 780-9037.)

Captains Courageous: The Musical—Frederick Freyer and Patrick Cook's musical version of Kipling's book—about a rich brat (Brandon Espinoza) who falls overboard from an ocean liner and is reformed by the poor fisherman (Treat Williams) who rescues him—suffers not from a lack of conviction but from a lack of conception. Most of it takes place on a crowded fishing boat, and it feels like cabin fever has set in and the crew is just trying to keep busy until shore leave, when they can get some real action. (Manhattan Theatre Club, at City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-1212.)

Clarence Darrow Tonight!—A one-man show about the famous lawyer, written by and starring Laurence Luckinbill. (Ensemble Studio Theatre, 549 W. 52nd St. 247-4982. Closes March 21.)

Death of a Salesman—From Chicago's Goodman Theatre, a fiftieth-anniversary staging of Arthur Miller's play. (3/8/99) (Eu-

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gene O'Neill, 230 W. 49th St. 239-6200.)

Electra—David Leveaux's powerful production of Sophocles' tragedy, starring Zoë Wanamaker. The play's bewildering brutality comes through as clearly as yesterday's headlines. (12/28/98 & 1/4/99) (Ethel Barrymore, 243 W. 47th St. 239-6200. Closes March 21.)

Everybody's Ruby—Thulani Davis's new drama, set in Florida in 1952, centers on the murder of a prominent white doctor by a married black woman. (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 239-6200.)

Far East—An American military officer (Michael Hayden) is caught in a triangle involving his commander's wife, in a drama by A. R. Gurney, set during the Korean War. (Mitzi E. Newhouse, Lincoln Center. 239-6200.)

Footloose—A musical adaptation of the 1984 film, co-written by Dean Pitchford (who also wrote the screenplay) and Walter Bobbie. With music by Tom Snow and lyrics by Mr. Pitchford. (Richard Rodgers, 226 W. 46th St. 307-4100.)

Fosse—Although this steamy revue of works by the choreographer Bob Fosse doesn't reveal anything new about the man behind the dances, it does remind us why we won't be forgetting him anytime soon. Created by Richard Maltby, Jr. (director), Ann Reinking (co-director/co-choreographer), and Chet Walker (choreography re-creator). (Broadhurst, 235 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

Halfway Home—From the New Group, a drama by Diane Bank, about a woman who returns to her family in Iowa after ten years of living in New York City. (St. Clement's, 423 W. 46th St. 279-4200.)

The Hothouse—A fascinating and funny, but not entirely successful, dip into surrealism by Harold Pinter. This 1980 play depicts the staff of some sort of insane asylum, and its picture of bureaucracy run wild and the staff's efforts to conform or escape is wonderfully observed, but the plot—concerning the asylum director's malfeasance and madness—is not particularly interesting. That's certainly not the fault of Larry Bryggman, who turns in a beautiful performance as the director; the rest of the cast, particularly Jordan Lage, as the chief assistant, is also very good. It's an evening of terrific moments, and Karen Kohlhaas's clean, sharp-eyed direction makes the most of them. (Atlantic, 336 W. 20th St. 239-6200.)

House/Lights—The Wooster Group presents surprisingly compelling nonsense—blending a Gertrude Stein opera libretto (something about Faust) and a campy, pre-silicone bondage film ("Olga's House of Shame") into a fast-paced, high-low sideshow. Throughout the performance, video monitors play film clips and provide techno high jinks (an actor flailing onstage outswims a sea monster on the TVs). Director Elizabeth LeCompte makes a convincing argument for fractured attention (from Cubism to MTV) as a valuable twentieth-century development, but she couldn't do it without Kate Valk, who rolls her eyes like Mary Pickford and gives entrancing Betty Boop line readings of the Steinian babble. (Performing Garage, 33 Wooster St. 966-3651.)

James Naughton: Street of Dreams—Between covers of romantic tunes by artists ranging from Billy Strayhorn to the King, Naughton inserts funny, standup-style anecdotes from his thirty-year stage career, and whether in monologue or in song he's a charmer. He may not have Bing Crosby's command (he's a little too earnest when he croons "I'm Hip"), but his voice is smoothly charged, and so is his band, which is led by the superb John Oddo on piano. (Promenade, Broadway at 76th St. 580-1313.)

Jodie's Body—A one-woman show by Aviva Jane Carlin, who portrays a plump artist's model living in London, whose ruminations, delivered in the nude, touch on the politics of beauty and the politics of her native South Africa. (ArcLight Theatre, 152 W. 71st St. 307-4100.)

Killer Joe—In Tracy Letts's graphically violent dark comedy, an American family striving for a better life—in this case, a bunch of losers living in a trailer outside Dallas—hires a hit man to help things along. The terrific production is so vividly unselfconscious that you hardly feel assaulted at all. Wilson Milam is the director. (SoHo Playhouse, 15 Vandam St. 239-6200.)

The Mineola Twins—In Paula Vogel's comedy, Swoosie Kurtz portrays both a good sister and her evil twin. Directed by Joe Mantello. (Laura Pels, Broadway at 45th St. 719-9300.)

The Most Fabulous Story Ever Told—Paul Rudnick's new version of a very old tale, starring Alan Tudyk and Jay Goede as Adam and Steve and Becky Ann Baker and Kathryn Meisle as Jane and Mable. (Minetta Lane Theatre, 18 Minetta Lane, east of Sixth Ave., between W. 3rd and Bleecker Sts. 420-8000.)

Julie Atlas Muz, Emily Fraenkel, Cydney Wilkes, and Karen Sherman bearing arms in Wilkes's "Premonitions of Latitude (Plot)," at Dance Theatre Workshop.

JOSEF ASTOR

Night Must Fall—Matthew Broderick plays a psychopath in a National Actors Theatre revival of Emlyn Williams's 1935 thriller, directed by John Tillinger. (Lyceum, 149 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

Not About Nightingales—Tennessee Williams's recently rediscovered early play, inspired by a 1938 prison uprising, is directed by Trevor Nunn. (3/8/99) (Circle in the Square, 50th St. west of Broadway. 239-6200.)

Paradise Hotel—A look into the nightmarish yet often hilarious workings of the human subconscious is almost always what you get with a Richard Foreman play (no complaints there), and in this case his concerns are particularly libidinal. A group of unfulfilled travellers searching for sexual nirvana end up finding nothing even remotely like it. Along the way, though, the audience gets the big idea even if the poor pilgrims don't: sex and romance are not on the same map, and believing otherwise makes for a perilous trip. (St. Mark's In-the-Bouwerie, Second Ave. at 10th St. 533-4650.)

Running Man—A familiar tale—the destruction of a family by racism and drug abuse—told with a grace and power that make it newly meaningful. Almost every word is sung, and Diedre Murray's jazz-inflected music is ruefully evocative. The fine performances, though, are the heart of the show. Smoothly directed by Diane Paulus. Cornelius Eady wrote the book. (HERE, 145 Sixth Ave., near Spring St. 647-0202. Closes March 14.)

The Seagull—This Target Margin Theatre production of Erika Warmbrunn's new translation of Chekhov's 1895 play about love, creativity, and the theatre is simple and modern yet has none of the heavy-handed "modernization" currently favored by many translators. The words mesh well with the energy, wit, and honest emotion induced by the director, David Herskovits, who gets stronger in his every outing. Gretchen Lee Krich (as Polina), Raphael Nash Thompson (as Dr. Dorn), and Greig Sargeant (as the put-upon Medvedenko) turn in especially fine performances. Unfortunately, some significant miscasting in other roles makes the production less powerful than it should be. An evening with the intriguing and improving Target Margin is almost always well spent—but not this time. (Ohio Theatre, 66 Wooster St. 358-3657.)

Side Man—Warren Leight's astute, elegiac play, expertly directed by Michael Mayer, is a young man's bittersweet homage to his crazy, warring parents and to the mysteries of the jazz life that divided them. (11/23/98) (Golden, 252 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

Snakebit—Actor turned playwright David Marshall Grant's drama about three friends in a state of flux has moved to a new theatre. Jace Alexander directed. (Century Theatre, 111 E. 15th St. 239-6200.)

This Is Our Youth—While Kenneth Lonergan's highly praised comedy about postadolescent heartbreak shows real theatrical promise, it is good on surface behavior but not on subtext—everything that is psychologically important happens offstage. (Douglas Fairbanks, 450 W. 42nd St. 239-6200.)

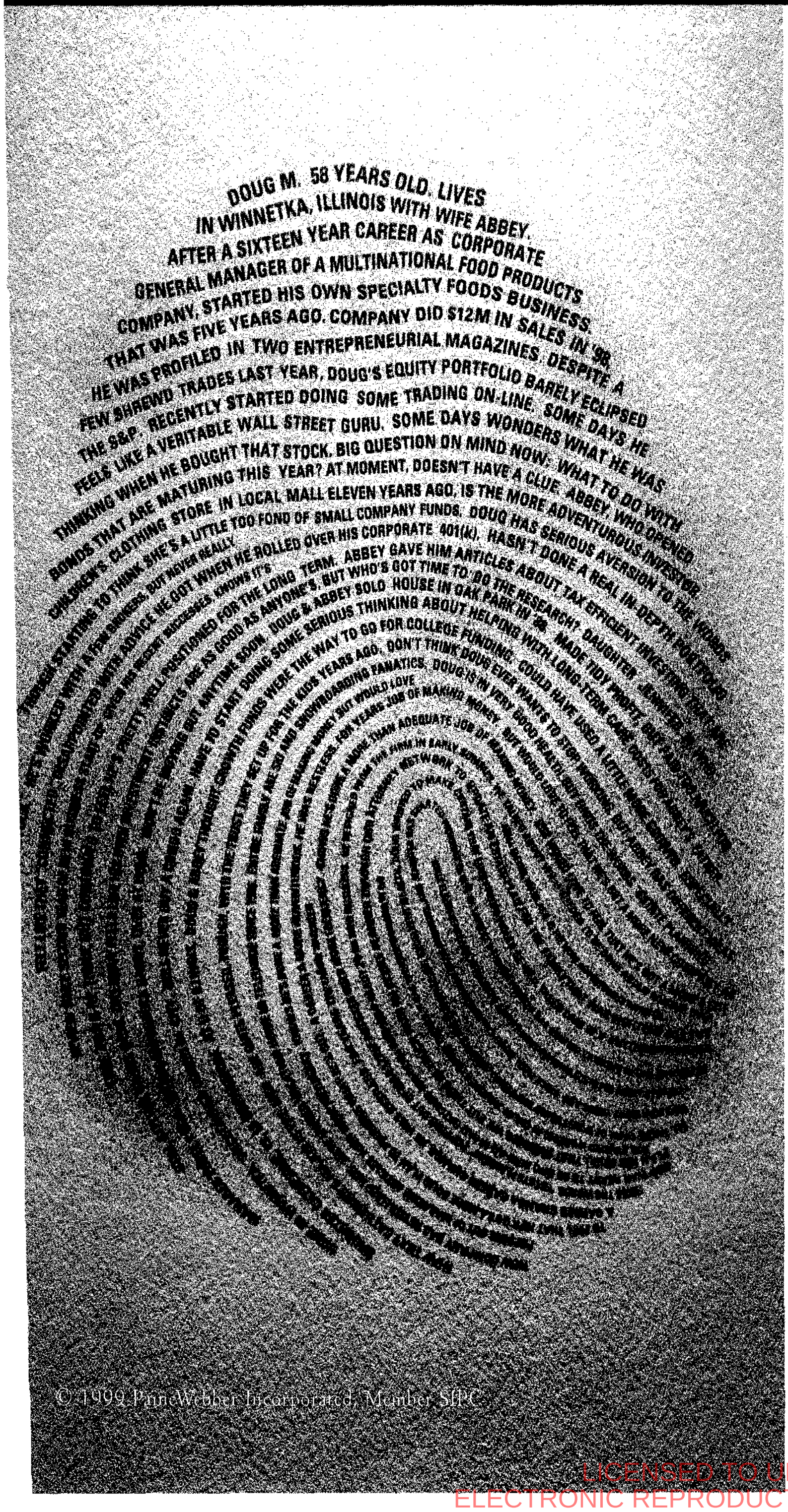
Wit—In this first play by Margaret Edson, about the life and death (from ovarian cancer) of a John Donne scholar, Kathleen Chalfant gives an excruciating, powerful performance as Dr. Vivian Bearing, one of those larger-than-life professors who are terrifyingly smart, and proud of it. Right up to the last second, the show has riches of acting, writing, and stagecraft that you revel in, even in the atmosphere of death, and it is directed with just the right touch by Derek Anson Jones. (1/18/99) (Union Square Theatre, 100 E. 17th St. 307-4100.)

You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown—A nothing burger for audiences of all ages. (Ambassador, 219 W. 49th St. 239-6200.)

LONG RUNS

ART: Royale, 242 W. 45th St. 239-6200. . . . **BEAUTY AND THE BEAST:** Palace, Broadway at 47th St. 307-4100. . . . **THE BEAUTY QUEEN OF LEENANE:** Walter Kerr, 219 W. 48th St. 239-

IF OUR CLIENTS WERE ALL THE SAME, THEIR *portfolios* WOULD BE TOO.


DOUG M. 58 YEARS OLD. LIVES
IN WINNETKA, ILLINOIS WITH WIFE ABBEY.
AFTER A SIXTEEN YEAR CAREER AS CORPORATE
GENERAL MANAGER OF A MULTINATIONAL FOOD PRODUCTS
COMPANY, STARTED HIS OWN SPECIALTY FOODS BUSINESS.
THAT WAS FIVE YEARS AGO. COMPANY DID $12M IN SALES IN '98.
HE WAS PROFILED IN TWO ENTREPRENEURIAL MAGAZINES. DESPITE A
FEW SHREWD TRADES LAST YEAR, DOUG'S EQUITY PORTFOLIO BARELY ECLIPSED
THE S&P. RECENTLY STARTED DOING SOME TRADING ON-LINE. SOME DAYS HE
FEELS LIKE A VERITABLE WALL STREET GURU. SOME DAYS WONDERS WHAT HE WAS
THINKING WHEN HE BOUGHT THAT STOCK. BIG QUESTION ON MIND NOW: WHAT TO DO WITH
BONDS THAT ARE MATURING THIS YEAR? AT MOMENT, DOESN'T HAVE A CLUE. ABBEY, WHO OPENED
CHILDREN'S CLOTHING STORE IN LOCAL MALL ELEVEN YEARS AGO, IS THE MORE ADVENTUROUS INVESTOR

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6200. (Closes March 14.) . . . **BLUE MAN GROUP/TUBES:** Astor Place Theatre, 434 Lafayette St. 254-4370. . . . **CABARET:** Studio 54, at 254 W. 54th St. 239-6200. . . . **CATS:** Winter Garden, Broadway at 50th St. 239-6200. . . . **CHICAGO:** Shubert, 225 W. 44th St. 239-6200. . . . **DE LA GUARDA:** Daryl Roth, 20 Union Sq. E., at 15th St. 239-6200. . . . **THE FANTASTICKS:** Sullivan Street Playhouse, 181 Sullivan St., at Bleecker St. 674-3838. . . . **FORBIDDEN BROADWAY:** Stardust, Broadway at 51st St. 239-6200. . . . **HEDWIG AND THE ANGRY INCH:** Jane Street Theatre, Hotel Riverview Ballroom, 113 Jane St. 239-6200. . . . **I LOVE YOU, YOU'RE PERFECT, NOW CHANGE:** Westside, 407 W. 43rd St. 239-6200. . . . **JEKYLL & HYDE:** Plymouth, 236 W. 45th St. 239-6200. . . . **LATE-NITE CATECHISM:** St. Luke's Church, 308 W. 46th St. 239-6200. . . . **THE LION KING:** New Amsterdam, 214 W. 42nd St. 307-4100. . . . **LES MISÉRABLES:** Imperial, 249 W. 45th St. 239-6200. . . . **MISS SAIGON:** Broadway Theatre, Broadway at 53rd St. 239-6200. . . . **THE MYSTERY OF IRMA VEP:** Westside, 407 W. 43rd St. 239-6200. . . . **OVER THE RIVER AND THROUGH THE WOODS:** John Houseman, 450 W. 42nd St. 239-6200. . . . **PERFECT CRIME:** Duffy, 1553 Broadway, at 46th St. 695-3401. . . . **THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA:** Majestic, 245 W. 44th St. 239-6200. . . . **RAGTIME:** Ford Center for the Performing Arts, 213 W. 42nd St. 307-4100. . . . **RENT:** Nederlander, 208 W. 41st St. 921-8000. . . . **THE SCARLET PIMPERNEL:** Minskoff, 45th St. west of Broadway. 307-4100. . . . **SECRETS EVERY SMART TRAVELER SHOULD KNOW:** Ibis, 327 W. 44th St. 239-6200. . . . **SMOKEY JOE'S CAFÉ:** Virginia, 245 W. 52nd St. 239-6200. . . . **THE SOUND OF MUSIC:** Martin Beck, 302 W. 45th St. 239-6200. . . . **STOMP:** Orpheum, 126 Second Ave., at St. Marks Pl. 477-2477. . . . **SYMPHONIE FANTASTIQUE:** HERE, 145 Sixth Ave., near Spring St. 647-0202. . . . **TITANIC:** Lunt-Fontanne, 205 W. 46th St. 307-4100. . . . **TONY N' TINA'S WEDDING:** St. Luke's Church, 308 W. 46th St. 239-6200.

DANCE

Paul Taylor Dance Company—March 9 at 8, March 13 at 2, and March 14 at 7:30: "Cloven Kingdom," "Fiddlers Green," and "Piazzolla Caldera." . . . ¶ March 10 and March 12-13 at 8: "Roses," "The Word," and "Oh, You Kid." . . . ¶ March 11 at 8 and March 14 at 3: "A Field of Grass," "Profiles," "Nightshade," and "Offenbach Overtures." (City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-1212.)

DanceGalaxy—The fourteen-member ballet troupe, made up of veterans of such companies as New York City Ballet, Dance Theatre of Harlem, Paris Opera Ballet, and the Joffrey, makes its New York début with works by William Forsythe, Michael Smuin, Ginger Thatcher, and Dennis Wayne. (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 242-0800. March 9-12 at 8, March 13 at 2 and 8, and March 14 at 2 and 7:30.)

Carnival—Dance Theatre Workshop's two-month-long series designed to give extended exposure to emerging companies. March 9-10 at 8: **JAMES CUNNINGHAM AND JANE COMFORT** in "Together Again." Through March 28. . . . ¶ March 11-12 at 8: **KEELY GARFIELD** in "Minor Repairs Necessary." Through March 21. . . . ¶ March 13 at 8 and March 14 at 3: **CYDNEY WILKES** in "Premonitions of Latitude (Plot)." One hallmark of Wilkes's choreography is the sense that anything can happen. In her latest full-length work, the eight women in her company appear, variously, as scientists involved in bootleg nuclear testing, E.R. doctors, "Charlie's Angels"-style government operatives, a celebrity named "G" who is stranded on a desert island, a synchronized-swimming team, and an angelic dolphin. In rehearsal, Wilkes says, she starts with a situation, a beginning and an end, and lets her dancers go from there; the crack team she has assembled—including Clarinda Mac Low, Nami Yamamoto, Emily Fraenkel, and Paige Martin—are, among other things, natural shape-shifters. "A little acting background helps," Wilkes says, describing her improvisatory process. "They understand that I'm waiting for things to unfold." (219 W. 19th St. 924-0077. The festival continues through March 28.)

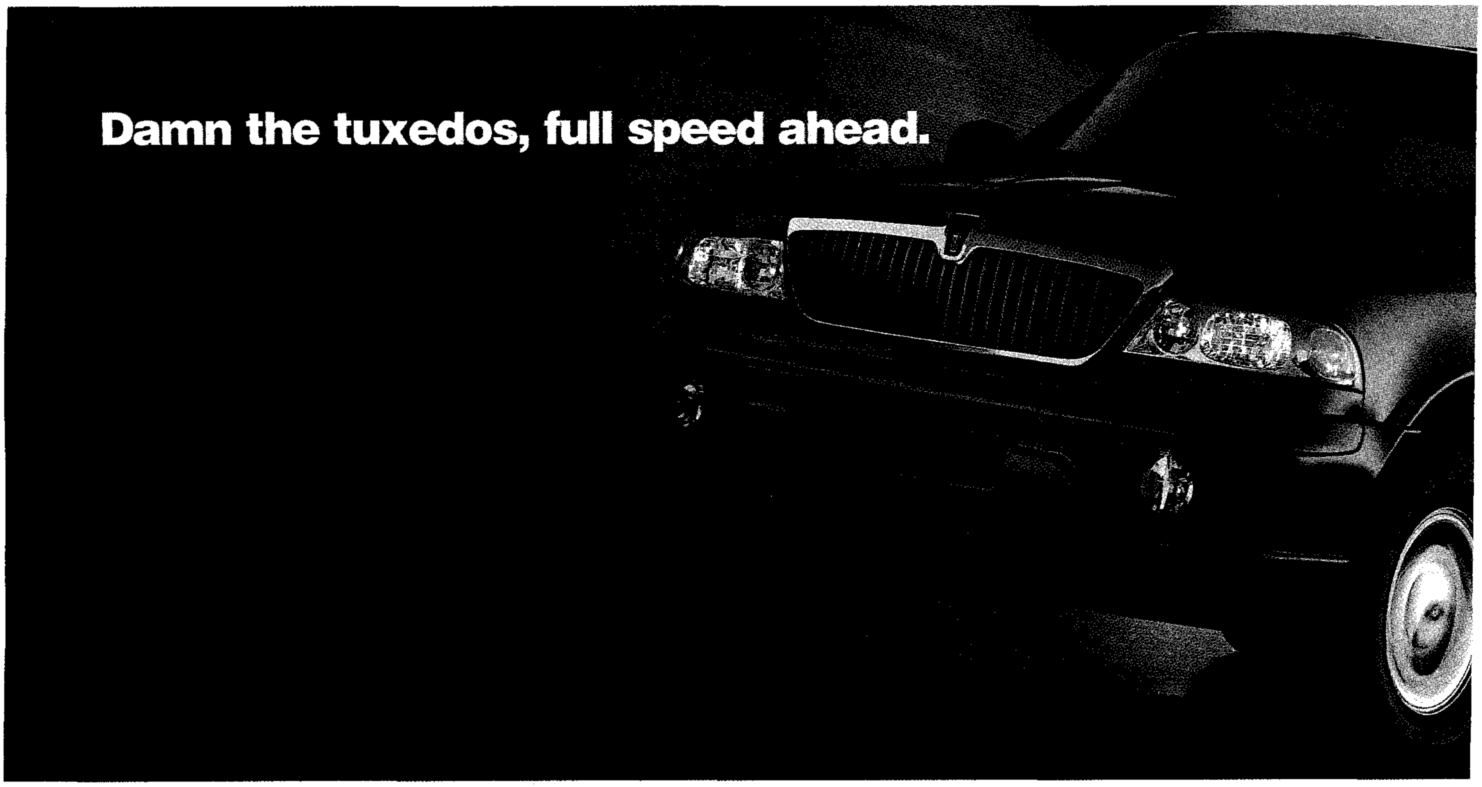
92nd Street Y Harkness Dance Project—The Uptown dance series continues with "Unusual Ellington," a suite of chamber works by Donald Byrd/The Group set to music by Duke Ellington. (Playhouse 91, at 316 E. 91st St. 415-5553. March 9-11 and March 13 at 8 and March 14 at 5.)

"Water Candy Fruit"—The choreographer Mark Jarecke presents five works, including the title work, based on the writings of Noam Chomsky. (Danspace Project, St. Mark's In-the-Bouwerie, Second Ave. at 10th St. 674-8194. March 11-14 at 8:30.)

"Memoryscan"—The choreographer Koosil-ja Hwang and her company, Dance Kumikokimoto, use video projections, electronic music, and Hwang's "circle and line" movement style to explore the effects of forgotten ethnic heritage. (The Kitchen, 512 W. 19th St. 255-5793. March 10-13 at 8.)

"Terra Firma"—The former David Parsons dancer Gail Gilbert presents nine works, including "Farther to Fall," "Blindside," and "Thruway Waltz." (Rose Building, Lincoln Center. 330-6785. March 12 at 8, March 13 at 4 and 8, and March 14 at 3 and 7.)

The Moving Company—The six-member company presents three premières by Kate Gyllenhaal; two are dance works ("Influence" and "Venus Return") and one is a film ("A Cakewalk"). (Washington Square Methodist Church, 135 W. 4th St. 604-4456. March 12-13 at 8.)



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NIGHT LIFE

CONCERTS

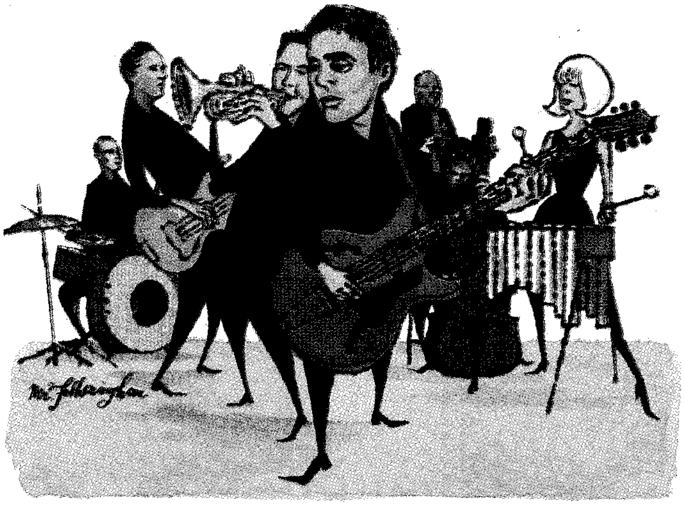
Jonny Lang—Though he's barely out of his teens, Lang—a pencil-thin, blond pinup guitar-slinger—plays with the poise and fire of a weathered Delta blues geezer. He's a genuine heavyweight, and he's building a youthful mainstream fan base for the blues in a way that hasn't been seen since the death of Stevie Ray Vaughn. With Chris Whitley. (Hammerstein Ballroom, Manhattan Center, 311 W. 34th St. 564-4882. March 10 at 8.)

'N Sync—The Orlando-based quintet, built by the same bubblegum factory that gave the world the Backstreet Boys. (Nassau Coliseum. 212-307-7171. March 12 at 7:30.)

Adalberto Álvarez y Su Son—The Cuban native and his twelve-piece band. With the Harbor Conservatory Latin Big Band, which specializes in cubop. (Hostos Center for the Arts and Culture, 450 Grand Concourse, at 149th St., the Bronx. 718-518-4455. March 13 at 7:30.)

Everclear—On last year's "So Much for the Afterglow," Everclear happily thumbed its nose at the infamous sophomore jinx. Art Alexakis, who has been woefully underrated as a songwriter, leads the trio that performs his snickering, cyanide-laced garage rock with expert precision. With local heroes Soul Coughing and rappers Black Eyed Peas. (Roseland, 239 W. 52nd St. 307-7171. March 14 at 6:45.)

Jazz at the Flea—March 15 at 8: Soprano saxophonist Phillip Johnston, a linchpin of the late Microscopic Septet, now presides over a drummerless chamber ensemble that juggles his various musical obsessions, from cool jazz to contemporary classical. (Flea Theatre, 41 White St., between Broadway and Church St. 226-0051.)



Champale, at the Mercury Lounge.

EDWIN FOTHERINGHAM

CLUBS

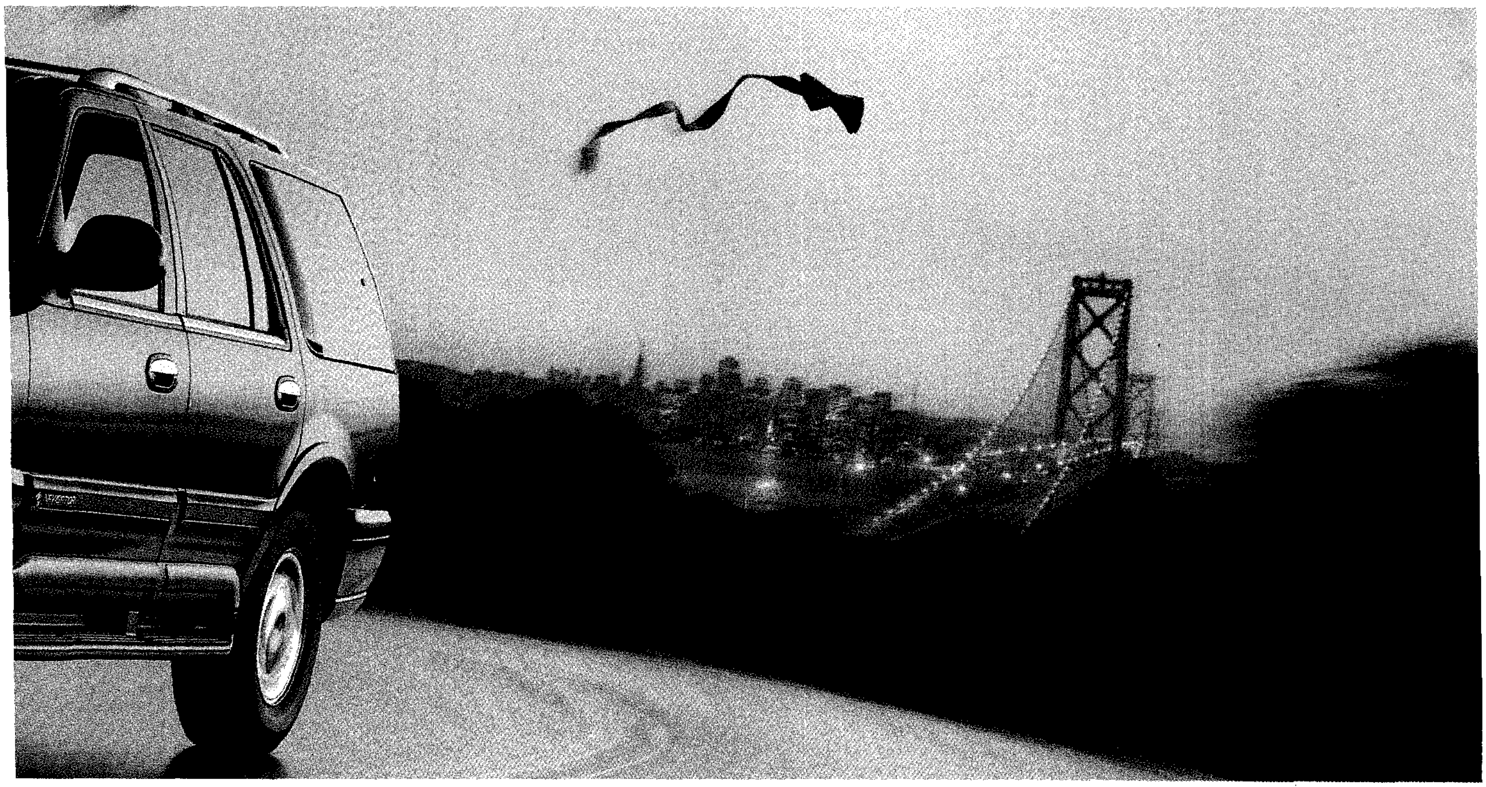
(A highly arbitrary listing, in which boldface type indicates some of the more notable performers in town. Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it's advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.)

Bottom Line, 15 W. 4th St., at Mercer St. (228-6300)—March 16: Better known for her work in the classic band Heart (and for her subsequent marriage to filmmaker Cameron Crowe), **nancy wilson,** the blond, guitar-playing sister of singer Ann, takes her solo act on the road. Expect Heart songs and a few folk-flavored covers.

Bowery Ballroom, 6 Delancey St. (533-2111)—March 10: Hip-hop with **the jungle brothers.** March 11-12: Though many still consider singer-guitarist Lou Barlow the first—and finest—of the lo-fi indie rockers, **sebadoh,** his primary band, seems to have moved away from its acoustic roots. Actually, the wildly eclectic band of old, a group capable of covering the Minutemen and David Crosby with equal aplomb, simply splintered into a long series of side projects (Sparkalepsy, Sentridoh, Folk Implosion, et al.). Having shed so many skins, today's Sebadoh (which picked up a new drummer, Russ Pollard, for its latest disk, "The Sebadoh") is a leaner but not entirely new animal; the trio continues to play perfectly crafted, honest (read: ambiguous and emotionally twisted), impassioned songs about love and hate.

Chicago B.L.U.E.S., 73 Eighth Ave., at 13th St. (924-9755)—The veteran outfit **roomful of blues** comes in March 12-13.

Coney Island High, 15 St. Marks Pl. (674-7959)—March 11: **spottiswoode & his enemies.** Jonathan Spottiswoode, the genius behind this tight sextet, writes astringently morose ballads about love, and his deep, rough-hewn voice will make you think of Leonard Cohen.



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With the Boston-based lounge act **LARS VEGAS.** March 14: The local combo **LES SAVY FAV,** fronted by the charismatic Gibb Slife, takes over.

FEZ, 380 Lafayette St. (533-7000)—A comfortable neo-Moroccan bar hidden inside the Time Café. March 16: The precocious Staten Island duo **PROFESSOR AND MARYANN** balances the cerebral (courtesy of guitarist-songwriter Ken Rockwell) with dark good looks (from helium-throated singer Danielle Brancaccio). The **MINGUS BIG BAND** still packs them in every Thursday. Dining.

MAXWELL'S, 1039 Washington St., Hoboken (201-798-0406)—March 11: The Japanese duo **CIBO MATTO** churns out kitschy broken-English raps about food ("Beef Jerky," "White Pepper Ice Cream") over a sonic bricolage that jams together some of the most strikingly original sounds that have ever found their way onto a record. Lately they've been mixing it up with Sean Lennon, so who knows what to expect? March 15: **JUNIOR BROWN** is probably the only guitarist who can switch from rapid-fire chicken pickin' to delicate slide work in the course of a single bar.

MERCURY LOUNGE, 217 E. Houston St. (260-4700)—March 11: Groovy downtown songwriter **OREN BLOEDOW,** best known for his skewed, cocktail-jazz-style compositions with the band Elysian Fields. **CHAMPALE.** Singer-songwriter Mark Rozzo has put together an unusually flexible and inventive septet (including Luna's drummer, Lee Wall, and Clem Snide's cellist, Jason Glasser) that brings his latest intriguing compositions to life. The band covers the territory from meditative spaciness to full-bore freakout, sometimes in one tune. It's modern pop that's a bit retro, too, with just enough psychedelia thrown in to make you check your drink. March 12: **THE BILLY NAYER SHOW,** on loan from the left coast.

S.O.B.'S, 204 Varick St., at W. Houston St. (243-4940)—March 15: Cuban *son* specialist **ADALBERTO ÁLVAREZ** (see Concerts). March 16: Reggae greats **FREDDIE MC GREGOR** and **MARCIA GRIFFITHS.** Dining.

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

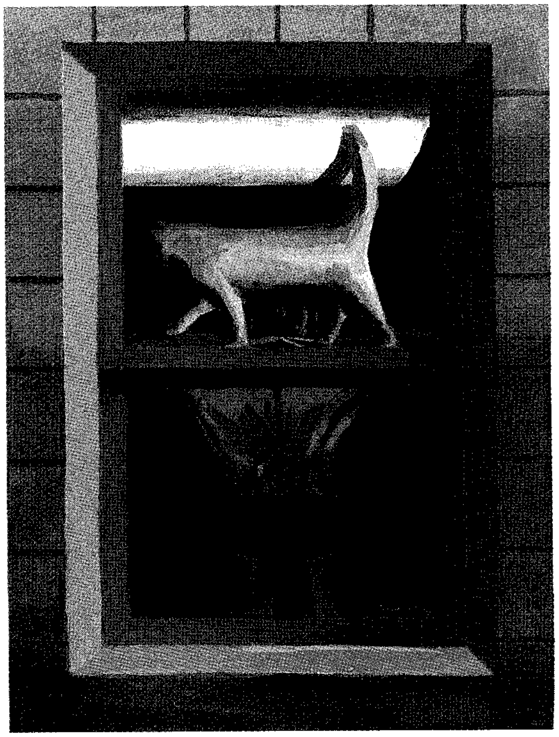
BIRDLAND, 315 W. 44th St. (581-3080)—March 11-13: The **ANDREW HILL** sextet. Hill's music is dark, elusive, unsettling, and beautiful. The now-you-see-him-now-you-don't pianist hit his artistic peak in the nineteen-sixties, the only decade that could spawn and tolerate the mysteries of his oblique harmonic stance, the derailed accents of his playing, his see-saw mid-tempo melodies, and his trademark dirgelike ballads. If Hill has mellowed over the years, ironing out his rhythms and taming his attitude, there's still enough of the dogged individualist in him to remind you of the good, and cryptic, old days. He's joined here by longtime Hill fanatics including saxophonist **MARTY EHRLICH** and trumpeter **RON HORTON.** March 16: The newly formed **MINGUS ORCHESTRA** (in on Tuesdays in March) now augments the well-entrenched Mingus Big Band (Thursdays at Fez), and concentrates on the late bassist-composer's more formal works. Dining.

CARLYLE HOTEL, Madison Ave. at 76th St. (744-1600)—The Café Carlyle, a snug, windowless enclave in the doorman district, features discreet waiters, wraparound pastel murals, and, through March 13, the eternally amazing **EARTHA KITT.**

IRIDIUM, 44 W. 63rd St. (582-2121)—Through March 14: The **MARK WHITFIELD** quartet. A young guitarist with chops to spare, Whitfield has the funky fluidity of the pre-pop George Benson, enhanced by a deep vein of gospel and blues. Mondays belong to electric-guitar innovator **LES PAUL.**

JAZZ STANDARD, 116 E. 27th St. (576-2232)—March 11-14: The **CAROL SLOANE** quartet. Sloane, a superior vocalist who has put her on-again, off-again career firmly back on track, will join the throng in saluting the jazz deity of the year—and of the century—Duke Ellington. Dining.

KNITTING FACTORY, 74 Leonard St., between Broadway and Church St. (219-3055)—March 11-13: With his band **LATIN FOR TRAVELLERS,** super drummer **BOBBY PREVITE** brings it back home again for some loud and proud playing that refuses to turn its nose up at its rock influences. March 12: Three new-jazz heavies—drummer **JOEY BARON,** guitarist **MARC RIBOT,** and keyboardist **JON MEDESKI**—join forces in the name of improvisational fraternity and, hopefully, fun.



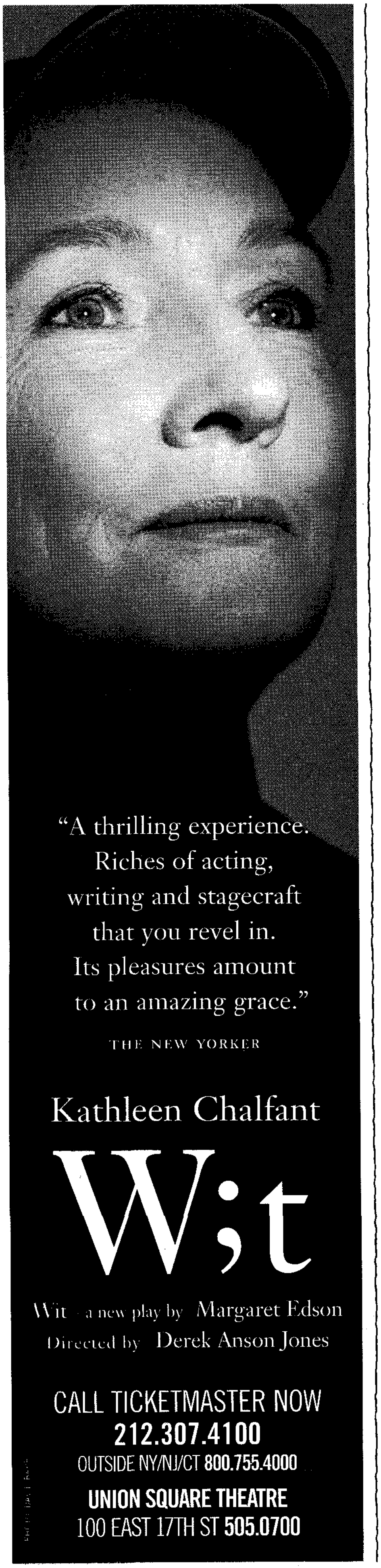
A self-portrait by Jerry Moriarty, at the Visual Arts Museum (see Galleries—Chelsea & Flatiron).

LENOX LOUNGE, 288 Lenox Ave., between 124th and 125th Sts. (427-0253)—March 12-13: With the **NEW YORK POWERHOUSE ENSEMBLE,** you get what's advertised: a group of hard-hitting hard boppers—saxophonist Craig Handy, pianist John Hicks, bassist Mickey Bass, and drummer Eric Allen—who take seriously their mandate to swing.

SWEET BASIL, 88 Seventh Ave. S., at Bleecker St. (242-1785)—The **FORT APACHE BAND** (through March 14) grafts its steaming Latin sensibility onto Coltrane-era modal vamps; leader Jerry Gonzalez is a virtuoso conga player and a steadily maturing trumpeter, and his brother Andy is the most prominent bassist on the Latin-jazz scene. Dining.

VILLAGE VANGUARD, 178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (255-4037)—Through March 21: Jazz doesn't want for master pianists, but there's only one **TOMMY FLANAGAN.** Tone, touch, taste, technique—he's got it all. But Flanagan's also a poet, and therein lies the key to his omnipotence. His spontaneous inventions have the formal perfection of written melodies yet retain the electricity of in-the-moment constructions. His choice choruses startle you with their beauty, leaving you spoiled for any other pianist. With Flanagan's imaginative repertoire and the almost alarming unity of his trio, it doesn't get any better. The **VANGUARD JAZZ ORCHESTRA** holds sway on Mondays.

ZINNO, 126 W. 13th St. (924-5182)—March 10-13: Bassist **CHARNETT MOFFET,** son of drummer Charles Moffet (who, like his son did



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three decades later, played a memorable stint with Ornette Coleman), and drummer **ERIC MC PHERSON,** son of the great second-generation bop saxophonist Charles McPherson, hook up with **JUSTIN ROBINSON,** a robust saxophonist who might well foster his own noteworthy musical lineage some day. March 14: The **SEAN SMITH** quartet. Bassist Smith has made so many first-rate jazz players sound even better that it's time he took the spotlight for himself—at least for one night. Dining.

ART

MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM, Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (879-5500)—"Eighteenth-Century French Drawings in New York Collections." Through April 25. . . . ¶ "Mirror of the Medieval World." Through July 4. . . . ¶ "Picasso: Painter and Sculptor in Clay." Through June 6. . . . ¶ "Anselm Kiefer: Works on Paper 1969-1993" presents fifty-four drawings, watercolors, gouaches, and woodcuts acquired by the museum in 1995. Through March 21. . . . ¶ "Dosso Dossi, Court Painter in Renaissance Ferrara." Through March 28. . . . ¶ "American Folk Art in the Metropolitan Museum." Through March 14. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:30, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 9.)

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART, 11 W. 53rd St. (708-9480)—A demure exhibition of twenty-five small framed samplers, embroidered by Elaine Reichek. Instead of pious maxims with floral borders, Reichek "samples" texts and images that refer to the tradition of women's handicrafts. Homer's Penelope makes an appearance, along with a stitched version of a Seurat drawing that depicts his mother sewing. But Reichek's unwillingness to venture a visual idea of her own seems more ladylike than feminist. Through March 30. . . . ¶ "Julia Margaret Cameron's Women." Through May 4. . . . ¶ "Sight Gags: Grotesque, Caricature, and Wit in Modern and Contemporary Drawing." Through May 4. . . . ¶ "Pop Impressions Europe/USA" presents print works by Americans (Warhol, Lichtenstein, et al.) beside examples from their European counterparts (Richard Hamilton, Gerhard Richter). Through May 18. (Open Saturdays through Tuesdays, and Thursdays, 10:30 to 6; Fridays, 10:30 to 8:30.)

GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM, Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (423-3500)—"Picasso and the War Years: 1937-45." Through May 9. . . . ¶ "Jim Dine: Walking Memory, 1959-69." Through May 16. (Open Sundays through Wednesdays, 10 to 6; Fridays and Saturdays, 10 to 8.)

WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART, Madison Ave. at 75th St. (570-3676)—Ray Johnson (1927-1995) was famous for being New York's most famous unfamous artist. He deliberately cultivated his role as an outsider, although he practically invented the "happening" and correspondence art, among other things. His retrospective is a gas, more like a raid on the closet of a highly imaginative pack rat than an art exhibit. Through March 21. . . . ¶ An exhibition of fifty-two Brice Marden drawings. Through March 28. . . . ¶ "Pale Guide to Transparent Things," an exhibition of photographs by Seton Smith. Through April 4. . . . ¶ "Circular Breathing," a video installation by Gary Hill. Through March 21. (Open Wednesdays, and Fridays through Sundays, 11 to 6; Thursdays, 1 to 8.)

BROOKLYN MUSEUM OF ART, Eastern Parkway (718-638-5000)—"Domestic Transformations: Working in Brooklyn" features paintings and sculptures by borough residents Ann Agee, Ron Baron, Jean Blackburn, and Andy Yoder. Through March 14. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5; Saturdays and Sundays, 11 to 6.)

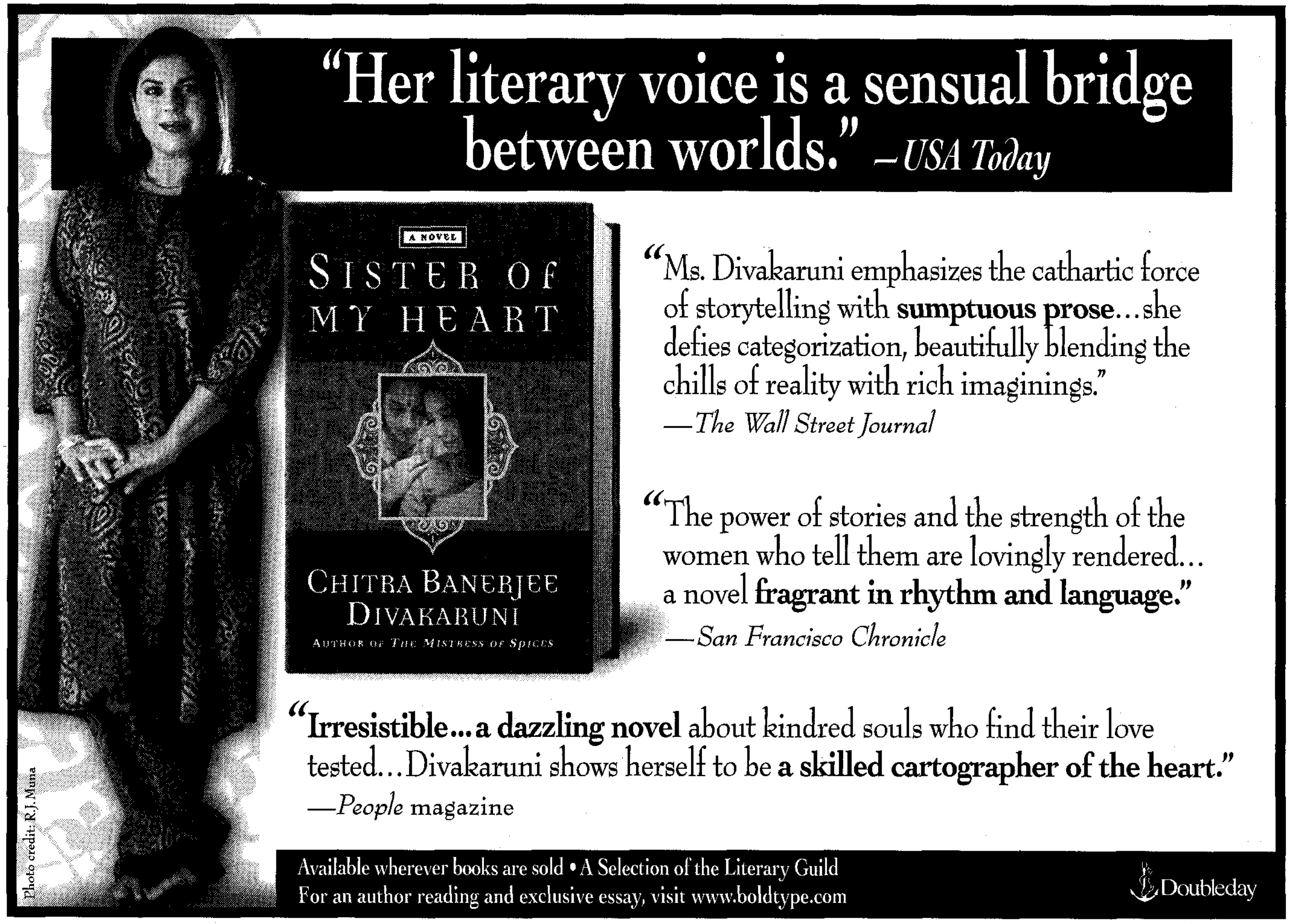
MUSEUM OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK, Fifth Ave. at 104th St. (534-1672)—"Landscapes of Hope: Rebuilding New York City's Neighborhoods." Larry Racioppo's color photographs, taken during his tenure as staff photographer for the city's Department of Housing Preservation and Development, chronicles the revitalization effort that has been under way over the past decade, as city neighborhoods steady themselves after the devastating effects of seventies-era disinvestment, abandonment, and arson and the eighties' crack culture. "Before" prints of decrepit and grafitti-covered brownstones are juxtaposed with "after" shots of the same buildings, so restored (and scrubbed and painted) as to be almost unrecognizable. Through June 27. (Open Wednesdays through Saturdays, 10 to 5; Sundays, noon to 5.)

GALLERIES—UPTOWN

(Unless otherwise noted, galleries are open Tuesdays through Saturdays, from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6.)

STUART SHILS—Impressionistic landscapes and urban vignettes, loosely painted in oil on paper, each about a foot square. Stylistically, they range from finished architectural studies in bright winter light (Shils is particularly good with cars parked around buildings) to atmospheric snapshots of rainstorms and dusk on rivers with details that recall Rothko and Guston. A sense of place is powerfully evident in each of these paintings, and that is all the more impressive given their diversity of light and tone. Through March 13. (De Nagy, 724 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. 262-5050.)

RICHARD FLEISCHNER—The title "Mazes and Squares" doesn't really capture the breadth of work in this exhibition. The mazes are there, in drawings and plans and a balsa model of a human-scale maze that the artist built in Amherst, Massachusetts. Among the other objects are a handsome mahogany



"Her literary voice is a sensual bridge between worlds." –USA Today

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—*San Francisco Chronicle*

"**Irresistible...a dazzling novel** about kindred souls who find their love tested...Divakaruni shows herself to be **a skilled cartographer of the heart.**"
—*People* magazine

Photo credit: R.J. Muna

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Doubleday

monolith faced in copper and flecked with gold leaf, a suite of large-format photographs of the Italian hillside village of Matera, and a series of white gouaches, their surfaces distressed to resemble fragments from an ancient monument. The trig leather-covered bench one sits upon to look at all these objects is part of the show, too. Through March 20. (Danese, 41 E. 57th St. 223-2227.)

Susan Hauptman—Nine exquisitely finished charcoal self-portraits, marred by contrived surrealist mannerisms—a man's head floats irrelevantly through some of the drawings, the artist is dressed in a gingham dress, a flatly drawn squirrel sits on her hand. Better are two straightforward still-lifes in the entry gallery, one of peppermint candy and the other of a cake with pastel rosettes. Hauptman's draftsmanship is accomplished and her vision of herself is deeply penetrating; one would like to save the faces and throw the gimmicks away. Through March 27. (Forum, 745 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. 355-4545.)

Tom Judd—A group of paintings inspired by an eight-day voyage down the Salmon River, in Idaho. The artist invokes frontier rusticity by painting loose, faux-naïve wilderness landscapes and outsized images of birds on patches of old wallpaper and highway maps. "Prom Night" is unabashed in its sentimentality: a romantic mountain scene, a pair of yellow-throated blackbirds, and a high-school-graduation portrait of a sixties girl with a flamboyant bouffant hairdo. Portraits of Buffalo Bill Cody and an Indian chief are too blatant in their glorification of the Old West to work nearly as well. Through March 20. (Associated American Artists, 20 W. 57th St. 399-5510.)

Elizabeth Murray—New paintings in the artist's jubilant style, halfway between Matisse and Dr. Seuss. Murray's works have grown less sculptural and more legible lately, but they remain attractively calamitous. Most of the shaped canvases and reliefs here feature coffee cups tumbling off splayed tabletops or shattering and spilling out toward the viewer. From such minor mishaps Murray makes grand exhilaration. Through March 13. (Pace Wildenstein, 32 E. 57th St. 421-3292.)

Tom Wesselmann—"Small Survey, Small Scale, 1960-98" includes drawings and maquettes for the artist's installations from the sixties and seventies, which combined real objects—a breast (its owner otherwise curtained), a perfume bottle, an orange—with flat paintings of female nudes. Through March 20. (Davidson, 41 E. 57th St. 799-7555.)

"Abstraction: The 1930's and 1940's"—The title is misleading, for the most interesting works here are actually figurative, albeit just barely: a superb reclining nude by Jackson Pollock, before he started dripping, a pair of blocky bronze female figures by Louise Nevelson, and two paintings by David Smith—a bizarre little portrait of a man he met in 1931 at a Thanksgiving dinner and a Cubist study in grisaille of a woman sitting at a table. The exhibit also includes work by Ilya Bolotowsky and several lesser-known artists. Through March 27. (Washburn, 20 W. 57th St. 397-6780.)

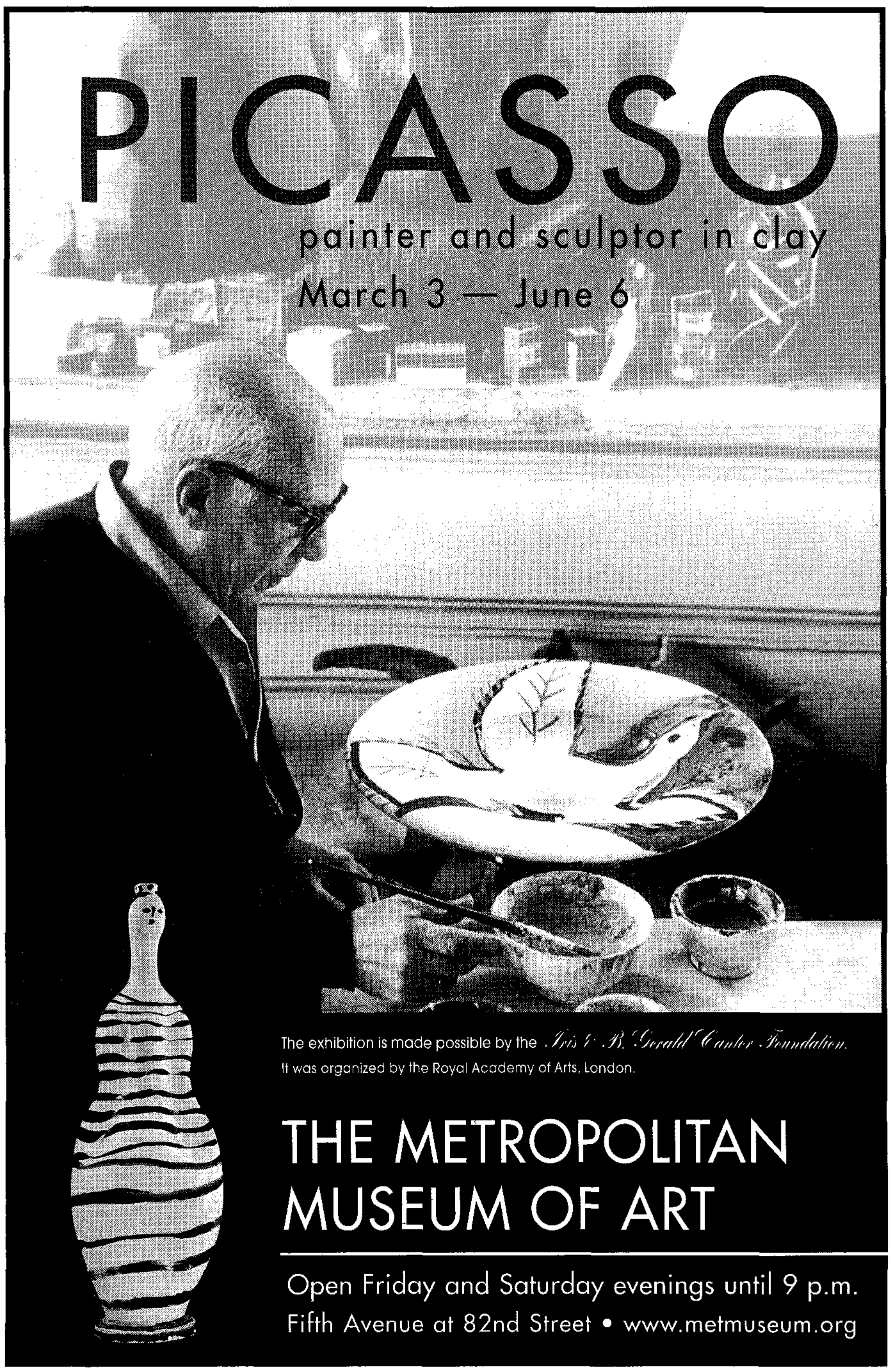
Short List—**georges braque,** Mitchell-Innes & Nash, 1018 Madison Ave., at 78th St. 744-7400. Through March 27. . . . **michael byron,** Baron/Boisanté, 50 W. 57th St. 581-9191. Through April 17. . . . **david dewey,** Tatistcheff, 50 W. 57th St. 664-0907. Through April 3. . . . **tom doyle** and **lawrence fane,** Kouros, 23 E. 73rd St. 288-5888. Both shows through April 10. . . . **joyce kozloff,** DC Moore, 724 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. 247-2111. Through March 27. . . . **tom leaver,** Graham, 1014 Madison Ave., at 78th St. 535-5767. Through March 25. . . . **robert andrew parker,** Davis & Langdale, 231 E. 60th St. 838-0333. Through March 13. . . . **anne peretz,** Salander-O'Reilly, 20 E. 79th St. 879-6606. Through March 27. . . . **picasso and hokusai,** Yoshii, 20 W. 57th St. 265-8876. Through April 10. . . . **giovanni battista piranesi,** Wallach Art Gallery, Columbia University, Broadway at 116th St. 854-7288. Open Wednesdays through Saturdays, 1 to 5; through March 20. . . . **doug safranek,** Schmidt Bingham, 41 E. 57th St. 888-1122. Through March 27. . . . **jon schueler,** ACA, 41 E. 57th St., 644-8300; and Perlow, 41 E. 57th St., 644-7171. Both shows through March 27. . . . **billy sullivan,** Fischbach, 24 W. 57th St. 759-2345. Through March 27. . . . **donald sultan,** Knoedler, 19 E. 70th St. 794-0550. Through March 27.

GALLERIES—CHELSEA & FLATIRON

Karen Kilimnik—Small, deliberately amateurish paintings and photographs from the artist's celebrated "Me" series. Whether her subject is Leonardo DiCaprio with a bowl haircut or herself as a sixties nymphet in knee-high leather boots, Kilimnik aims to capture the spirit of stoned teenybopperdom, awash in apologetic narcissism and halfhearted longing. In the end, though, titles like "Me Waiting for My Drug Dealer Boyfriend. . . Park Avenue. . .oops. . .Forgot. . .The Village, 1967" are more memorable than the pictures themselves. Through March 20. (303 Gallery, 525 W. 22nd St. 255-1121.)

Jerry Moriarty—A School of Visual Arts teacher for thirty-five years, Moriarty quietly practices and preaches a rigorous conceptual technique of painting only from memory. He uses Spartan, W.P.A.-like draftsmanship to depict antiheroic moments: a former job as a bowling-alley pin boy; a view of garbage collectors at night; making coffee with his cat. His work as a self-described "paintoonist" is equal parts Edward Hopper and "Nancy" comic-strip artist Ernie Bushmiller, whose slogan was "Dumb it down." Through April 1. (Visual Arts Museum, 209 E. 23rd St. 592-2181.)

Short List—**janine antoni,** Luhring Augustine, 531 W. 24th St. 206-9100. Through April 17. . . . **donald baechler,** Cheim & Read, 521 W. 23rd St. 242-7727. Through March 27. . . . **fiona banner,** Guy, 453 W. 17th St.


PICASSO
painter and sculptor in clay
March 3 — June 6
The exhibition is made possible by the Iris & B. Gerald Cantor Foundation.
It was organized by the Royal Academy of Arts, London.
THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART
Open Friday and Saturday evenings until 9 p.m.
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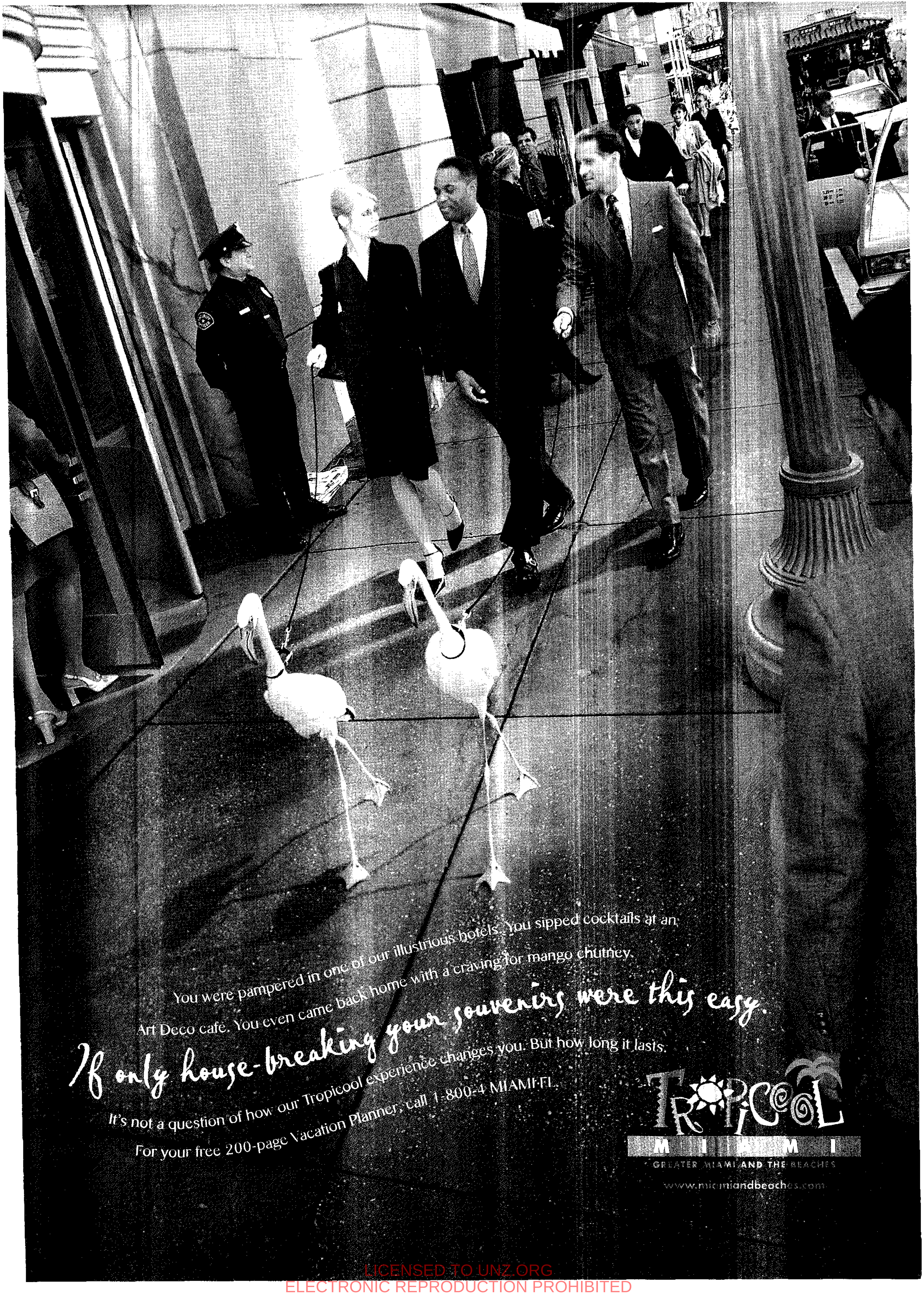
Top: Detail of photo by David Douglas Duncan. Bottom: Pablo Picasso, *Woman*, 1949, Musée Picasso, Paris, photo © RMN-Gérard Blot. Permission for likeness 1999 and for work of art © 1999 Estate of Pablo Picasso/ARS, N.Y.



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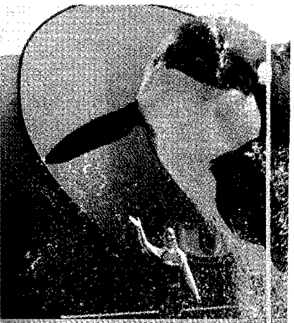

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The following is just a sampling of the Tropicool events going on in Greater Miami and the Beaches during the spring and summer months. For a complete 1999 Calendar of Events, visit our website at www.miamiandbeaches.com.

APRIL 1999

SUBTROPICS NEW MUSIC FESTIVAL (Apr. 1 – May 8) – An annual festival organized by the South Florida Composers Alliance. This event showcases the best in international new and experimental music as well as innovative sound art. For more information, call 305/758-6676.

THE BILTMORE INTERNATIONAL WINE FESTIVAL (Apr. 16 - 19) – This third annual charity event celebrates fine wine and cutting-edge cuisine. Proceeds benefit the United Way. For more information, call 305/445-8066 ext. 2340.

3RD ANNUAL HISPANIC FILM FESTIVAL OF MIAMI (Apr. 23 - May 2) – Capitalizing on Miami's stance as the Hollywood of the Spanish language film industry, this week-long festival highlights Spanish-language productions and the Hispanic film industry in Miami. For more information, call 305/279-1809.

TASTE OF THE BEACH (Apr. 23 - 25) – A culinary and music festival showcasing local restaurants and featuring jazz artists, with more than 30,000 concert-goers in attendance. For more information, call 305/672-1270.

MAY 1999

THE ARABIAN NIGHTS FESTIVAL (May 7 - 9) – Set against the Moorish and Arabian backdrop of downtown Opa-Locka, this festival-style bazaar's celebration of the area's diverse cultural heritage includes entertainment, ethnic foods, cultural activities and a parade. For more information, call 305/758-4166.

SOUTH BEACH DIVE & SEAFOOD FEST (May 7 - 9) – Celebrating Miami Beach as the "Wreckeational" Dive Capital of the Americas. Activities include off-shore diving, underwater photography and sandcastle contests and an underwater film festival. Enjoy live entertainment and an array of seafood delicacies. For more information, call 305/672-1270 or 800/SCUBA-MB.

ROOTS & CULTURE FESTIVAL (May 16) Celebrating the preservation of the history and roots of the African American heritage. For more information, call 305/756-5627.

BRAZILIAN FILM FESTIVAL OF MIAMI (May 21 - 29) – The only Brazilian film festival to be held in a foreign country. Audiences can watch the most recent Brazilian feature length and short feature films. The festival includes an exhibition and workshops with the actors, directors, and producers of the films showcased. For more information, call 305/859-9467.

JUNE 1999

THE INTERNATIONAL HISPANIC THEATER FESTIVAL (June 4 - 20) – One of the country's most significant Hispanic theater events, including major U.S., Latin American, Caribbean and European theater companies, plus an educational component of international scholars, playwrights, critics and theater professionals. For more information, call 305/445-8877.

MIAMI/BAHAMAS GOOMBAY FESTIVAL (June 5 - 7) – Goombay transforms Coconut Grove into Nassau's Bay Street as colorful costumed junkanoo groups dance down Grand Avenue to Caribbean rhythms, with rake 'n scrape instruments ranging from drums and whistles, to cowbells and combs. Features a wide variety of arts, crafts, food and drinks from more than 400 vendors. For more information, call 305/372-9966.

SOUTH FLORIDA BOAT SHOW (June 10 - 14) – More than 60 brand-name powerboat manufacturers showcase family runabouts, cruisers and fishing boats of all types. Also features outboard engines, power inflatables, jet skis, windsurfers, fishing tackle, diving gear, electronics and other marine recreational equipment. For more information, call 954/946-6164.

FLORIDA DANCE FESTIVAL (June 13 - 26) – A critically acclaimed two-week festival featuring more than a dozen performances by top dance companies from across the U.S. For more information, call 305/674-3350 or 800/252-0808.

Please contact the following organizations for performance schedules:
Florida Grand Opera – 305/854-1643
Miami City Ballet – 305/532-4880
New World Symphony – 305/673-3331
New World School of the Arts – 305/237-3341

For additional events and performances information, please contact the Miami-Dade Cultural Affairs Council's hotline at 305/577-5600.

Events subject to change and cancellation. Please call venue to confirm information.

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463-7372. Through April 3.... **JEREMY BLAKE,** Feigen, 535 W. 20th St. 929-0500. Through April 10.... **JEAN-MARC BUSTAMANTE,** Marks, 523 W. 24th St. 243-0200. Through March 20.... **DREW DOMINICK,** Team, 527 W. 26th St. 279-9219. Through March 27.... **JEFF ELROD** and **LISA RUYTER,** Hearn, 530 W. 22nd St. 727-7366. Both shows through April 10.... **GILBERT & GEORGE,** Gavin Brown's Enterprise, 436 W. 15th St. 627-5258. Through March 20.... **GRAHAM GILLMORE,** Kirkland, 504 W. 22nd St. 627-3930. Through April 16.... **BETHAN HUWS,** Bonakdar Jancou, 521 W. 21st St. 414-4144. Through April 3.... **STEVE KEISTER,** Maynes, 529 W. 20th St. 741-3318. Through April 3.... **KATHLEEN KUCKA,** Coploff, 526 W. 26th St. 741-1149. Through April 3.... **CURTIS MITCHELL** and **FRITZ WELCH,** AC Project Room, 453 W. 17th St. 645-4970. Both shows through April 3.... **JIM SHAW,** Metro Pictures, 519 W. 24th St. 206-7100. Through March 27.... **TIM WHITE,** De Folin, 529 W. 20th St. 242-3434. Through March 27.

GALLERIES—DOWNTOWN

WILLARD BOEPPLE—Sleek, handsome wall sculptures, made of wood sealed with graphite. With their lustrous silvery finish and simple, machine-made forms, Boepple's pieces suggest a cross between Shaker furniture and Minimalism. In a pair of works called "The Sense of Things," Boepple makes this connection explicit, constructing Donald Judd-like shelving units that mischievously slant, flip, and tilt. Elsewhere, he builds memorably odd cylindrical forms, like car engines put together by a left-hander. For all its elegance, there's a kind of austere clowning going on in this work. Through April 3. (New York Studio School, 8 W. 8th St. 673-6466.)

ROY DOWELL—High-spirited graphic abstractions, made from pieces of billboard advertising that were collected along the Los Angeles highways. Shards of printed color—especially electric oranges, yellows, and blacks—are Dowell's basic ingredients, although he's not averse to using chunks of recognizable imagery and lettering as well. The results are like love songs to Kurt Schwitters, in a clean, radiant, California key. Through March 13. (Marcus, 578 Broadway. 226-3200.)

TIM HAWKINSON—It's hard to believe that a single artist, working alone, could have created this enormous, breathtaking exhibition. As in his show three years ago, Hawkinson transforms ordinary materials into sprawling, intricate installations, testimonials to a berserk yet compulsively disciplined imagination. The centerpiece, "Pentecost," features twelve life-size figures tapping out percussive rhythms on the branches of a gargantuan tree. But there are also tiny marvels: a clock made from a tube of toothpaste, a miniature bird skeleton made from fingernail clippings and superglue. For sheer free-form ingenuity, Hawkinson is the art world's Michael Jordan. Through April 30. (Ace, 275 Hudson St. 255-5599.)

RAYMOND PETTIBON—A midcareer retrospective, featuring more than two hundred of the Los Angeles-based artist's cartoony ink drawings. Pettibon's favorite tactic pits highbrow text against lowbrow pictures. Passages based on Henry James or John Ruskin are paired with freehand references to pop culture—Gumby, say, or Joan Crawford. The results are funny, erudite, and macabre, like the thoughts of a deranged academic watching late-night TV. Through April 10. (The Drawing Center, 35 Wooster St. 219-2166.)

SHORT LIST—**DONALD BAECHLER,** Shafrazi, 119 Wooster St. 274-9300. Through April 10.... **JOHN BEERMAN,** Beitzel, 102 Prince St. 219-2863. Through April 3.... **BARBARA BLOOM,** Blum, 99 Wooster St. 343-0441. Through April 24.... **STEVEN BROWER,** Lombard Freid, 470 Broome St. 334-5060. Through April 3.... **NEKE CARSON,** Holly Solomon, 172 Mercer St. 941-5777. Through April 3.... **ALFREDO CEIBAL,** Malca, 580 Broadway. 966-8854. Through April 10.... **DOUGLAS GORDON,** Gagosian, 136 Wooster St. 228-2828. Through April 10.... **RACHEL KHEDOORI,** Zwirner, 43 Greene St. 966-9074. Through March 17.... **SAMM KUNCE,** Gibson, 568 Broadway. 925-1192. Through April 3.... **JILL LEVINE,** P.P.O.W, 476 Broome St. 941-8642. Through March 13.... **MA LIUMING,** Tilton, 49 Greene St. 941-1775. Through March 20.... **CHARLES LUCE,** Ross, 568 Broadway. 343-2161. Through April 17.... **MALCOLM MORLEY,** Sperone Westwater, 142 Greene St. 431-3685. Through March 20.... **ERWIN PFRANG,** Nolan-Eckman, 560 Broadway. 925-6190. Through April 17.... **MEL RAMOS,** Meisel, 141 Prince St. 677-1340. Through March 27.... **SCOTT REDDEN,** Dillon, 431 West Broadway. 966-2977. Through March 25.... **SERGIO VEGA,** Basilico Fine Arts, 26 Wooster St. 966-1831. Through March 20.... **STEPHEN WESTFALL,** Lennon, Weinberg, 560 Broadway. 941-0012. Through March 27.

TABLES FOR TWO

COCO ROCO, 392 Fifth Ave., Brooklyn (718-965-3376)—The atmosphere at this Peruvian spot in Park Slope (the name translates as "cock-a-doodle-doo") is like an easygoing, slow-burning party. Just inside the door, a mammoth rotisserie roasts chickens spinning five to a spit, and, along with the occasional fireball bursting from the grill, its glow provides the storefront space with its main source of light.

Coco Roco is less than a year old, but it's already booming, so you might have to wait a few minutes at the bar with a pitcher of fortified sangria and a snack of salty *cancha* (roasted corn kernels). The décor is distinctly halfhearted—a few touristy paintings of Incas in straw hats, a mirror etched with an elaborate image of the Brooklyn Bridge—but the crowd is a lively mix of longtime neighbors from the not-so-fancy side of Park Slope and cooler young refugees from Manhattan.

Ceviche—raw fish "cooked" with citrus juices—was invented by the Incas, so you really should sample it here, maybe as a starter. The *ceviche de conchas*—clams chilled in their shells and topped with *leche de tigre* (just a lime marinade, but it sounds exciting)—somehow tastes even fresher than plain raw clams. All the appetizers are great, and in the entrée department *tacu-tacu con pescado*—sweet-potato-crusted red snapper with black-bean risotto—is the seafood standout.

For all the rotisserie drama on the way in, it's a surprise to find that the menu has only one chicken dish: *pollos a la brasa*—served *medio* or *entero*, half or whole. It is simply taken off the spit, hacked apart with giant scissors, and brought to the table, huge and crackling and moist—no sauces and no sides. At eight dollars a bird, you should go ahead and get the *entero* and look forward to a week's worth of sandwiches.

It would be nice if the Peruvian delicacy of guinea pigs fried in beer were offered, but Coco Roco is not so much about hard-sell authenticity as it is about simple good food and freewheeling atmosphere. When you hear the Andean-panpipe version of the theme from "The Godfather" playing on the sound system, you'll know you're in Brooklyn, not Lima, but you'll want to linger anyway. (Open daily for lunch and dinner. Entrées $4-$13.)

AUCTIONS AND ANTIQUES

SOTHEBY'S—March 11: American paintings, drawings, and sculptures.... ¶ March 12: Twentieth-century decorative art, including a large landscape window by Louis Comfort Tiffany and an earthenware tablet by Beatrice Wood; also, an arcade sale of moderately priced Art Nouveau and Art Deco pieces.... ¶ March 16: Important Judaica. (York Ave. at 72nd St. 606-7000.)

SWANN—An auction of early printed books. (104 E. 25th St. 254-4710. March 11.)

ARMORY ANTIQUES SHOW—A hundred dealers offering a range of collectibles. (7th Regiment Armory, Park Ave. at 66th St. March 10-14. For information, call 472-1180.)

TRIPLE PIER EXPO—The opening of a mammoth two-weekend gathering that is geared toward low-end and mid-range collectors. (Piers 88, 90, and 92, Twelfth Ave. between 48th St. and 52nd St. March 13-14. For information, call 255-0020. The show continues on March 20-21.)

PHOTOGRAPHY

STEPHANE COUTURIER / "VISAGE"—Large-scale Cibachrome prints of construction sites in Paris, Dresden, and Berlin. / Fifteen vintage portraits by, among others, Julia Margaret Cameron, Walker Evans, Diane Arbus, and Helmar Lerski. Both shows through March 27. (Laurence Miller, 20 W. 57th St. 397-3930.)

GERARDO SUTER—Two shows of works by the Argentinean artist, who has lived in Mexico since 1970. "Labyrinth of Memory," a midcareer survey, is at the Americas Society, Park Ave. at 68th St. (249-8950; open Sundays; through March 21), and at the Sculpture Center, 167 E. 69th St. (879-3500; through March 20). "New Territory" is at Throckmorton, 153 E. 61st St. (223-1059; through March 27).

"INSIDE/OUTSIDE"—Works from *Blind Spot* magazine's latest issue, by, among others, Jeff Brouws, Lia Nalbantidou, Richard Misrach, Tokihiro Sato, and John Waters. Through March 27. (Mann, at its new location, 210 Eleventh Ave., at 25th St. 989-7600.)

"VIEWS FROM THE EDGE OF THE WORLD"—Contemporary landscape photographs by Bernd and Hilla Becher, Andreas Gursky, Hiroshi Sugimoto, William Eggleston, Joel Meyerowitz, and others. Through April 3. (Marlborough, 211 W. 19th St. 463-8634. Open Mondays.)

INTERNATIONAL CENTER OF PHOTOGRAPHY MIDTOWN—"To the Rescue: Eight Artists in an Archive." Through May 16. (Sixth Ave. at 43rd St. 860-1777. Open Tuesdays through Thursdays, 10 to 5; Fridays, 10 to 8; and Saturdays and Sundays, 10 to 6.)

SHORT LIST—**TOM BAMBERGER,** Tonkonow, 601 W. 26th St. 255-8450. Through May 1.... **BERND AND HILLA BECHER,** Sonnabend, 420 West

Broadway. 966-6160. Through March 27. . . . **JED DEVINE,** Benrubi, 52 E. 76th St. 517-3766. Through March 27. . . . **EVE FOWLER,** Saul, 560 Broadway. 431-0747. Through April 10. . . . **LEE FRIEDLANDER,** Borden, 560 Broadway. 431-0166. Through March 20. . . . **BARBARA KASTEN,** Weber, 529 W. 20th St. 691-5711. Through March 13. . . . **SY KATTELSON,** Gallery 292, at 120 Wooster St. 431-0292. Through March 13. . . . **WENDELL MAC RAE,** Witkin, 415 West Broadway. 925-5510. Through April 10. . . . **BARBARA MORGAN** and **BRETT WESTON,** Danziger, 851 Madison Ave., at 70th St. 734-5300. Open Sundays, noon to 5; both shows through March 27. . . . **ELLEN VON UNWERTH,** Staley-Wise, 560 Broadway. 966-6223. Through April 3. . . . **NICK WAPLINGTON,** Holly Solomon, 172 Mercer St. 941-5777. Through April 3. . . . **FREDERIC WEBER** and **AUGUST SANDER,** Richardson, 560 Broadway. 343-1255. Through March 27. . . . **CHARLIE WHITE,** Rosen, 525 W. 24th St. 627-6000. Through April 10.

(See the museum listings for photography exhibitions at the Museum of Modern Art, the Whitney Museum of American Art, and the Museum of the City of New York.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC

(The box-office number for Alice Tully Hall is 875-5050, and for Carnegie Hall and Weill Recital Hall, 247-7800.)

OPERA

Metropolitan Opera—**IL TROVATORE,** with Michele Crider, Larissa Diadkova, Richard Margison, and Alexandru Agache; conducted by Jun Märkl. (March 10 at 8.) . . . With Elena Zaremba instead of Ms. Diadkova. (March 13 at 8.) . . . **LA BOHÈME,** with Hei-Kyung Hong, Ainhoa Arteta, Richard Leech, and Gino Quilico; Marco Armiliato. (March 11 at 8.) . . . **RIGOLETTO,** with Andrea Rost, Ramón Vargas, and Franz Grundheber; Maurizio Benini. (March 12 and March 15 at 8.) . . . **KHOVANSHCHINA,** by Mussorgsky, with Dolora Zajick, Clifton Forbis, Vladimir Bogachov, Nikolai Putilin, Paata Burchuladze, and Roberto Scandiuzzi; Valery Gergiev. (March 13 at 1:30.) . . . **TOSCA,** with Carol Vaness, Luciano Pavarotti, and James Morris; Nello Santi. (March 16 at 7:30.) (Metropolitan Opera House. 362-6000.)

"Oberon, Inc."—You can count on the feisty young Opera Nova company to discover a subtext in pretty much anything. Here it revisits Weber's opera "Oberon" (rarely performed in any case), turning knights, princesses, and fairies into Harvard M.B.A.s, temporary secretaries, and corporate executives, the better to underscore what it considers to be a tale about hazardous-waste disposal. (Sanford Meisner Theatre, 164 Eleventh Ave., at 22nd St. March 10-13 and March 16 at 7:30 and March 14 at 3:30. Through March 20. For information about tickets, call 724-8204.)

New York City Opera—March 10 at 7:30 and March 13 at 8: "Lizzie Borden," by Jack Beeson. . . . ¶ March 11 at 7:30 and March 14 at 1:30: "Madama Butterfly." . . . ¶ March 12 at 8, March 13 at 1:30, and March 16 at 7:30: "La Bohème." (New York State Theatre. 870-5570.)

ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

New York Philharmonic—Paavo Järvi conducts Bartók's Violin Concerto No. 2 (with Gil Shaham) and Brahms's Symphony No. 2. (Avery Fisher Hall. 875-5030. March 11 and March 13 at 8, March 12 at 11 A.M., and March 16 at 7:30.)

Tafelmusik—The Canadian period-instrument orchestra, led by violinist Jeanne Lamon, performs programmatic music from the Baroque, including Biber's "Battalia," Telemann's "Burlesque de Don Quixote," and Vivaldi's "The Four Seasons." (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 996-1100. March 10 at 8.)

Riverside Symphony—George Rothman conducts Mendelssohn's D-Minor Violin Concerto (not the warhorse, which is in E Minor), with soloist Tomohiro Okumura, in addition to Webern's "Five Pieces for Orchestra" and Sibelius's "Suite Mignonne," "Rakastava," and "Suite Champêtre." (Alice Tully Hall. March 10 at 8.)

Vienna Philharmonic—At Carnegie Hall, Riccardo Muti conducting. March 10: An all-Mozart program comprising the Symphonies No. 38, No. 36, and No. 40. . . . ¶ March 11: Schumann's Symphony No. 2 and Shostakovich's Symphony No. 5. . . . ¶ March 12: Schubert's Symphony No. 3 and Tchaikovsky's "Manfred." (Evenings at 8.)

Sonidos de las Américas—The final week of the festival, which this year focusses on the music of Cuba, includes these highlights. March 10 at 8: The Herencia String Quartet. (Newman Theatre, at the Public Theatre, 425 Lafayette St. For information about tickets, call 977-8495.) . . . ¶ March 12 at 8: Works by Juan Piñera, Orlando García, José Loyola, and Keyla María Orozco Alemán, played by the American Composers Orchestra Chamber Players. (Weill Recital Hall.) . . . ¶ March 14 at 3: Dennis Russell Davies leads the American Composers Orchestra in Harold Gramatges's "Serenata," Aurelio de la Vega's "Adiós," Lecuona's "Rapsodia Negra" (featuring pianist Santiago Rodriguez), Leo Brouwer's "Canción de la Gesta," and Julián Orbón's "Tres Versiones Sinfónicas." (Carnegie Hall.) (For information about other festival events, call 977-8495.)

New Amsterdam Singers—Clara Longstreth directs Poulenc's Mass in G Major, "Litanies de la Vierge Noire," and "Petites Prières de Saint François," in addition to pieces by Fauré, Hindemith, and others. (Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, Central Park W. at 65th St. March 11 and March 13 at 8. For information about tickets, call 568-5948.)

Los Angeles Philharmonic—At Avery Fisher Hall, Esa-Pekka Salonen conducting. March 12 at 8: Haydn's Symphony No. 8 ("Le Soir"); Britten's Serenade for Tenor, Horn, and Strings; and Mozart's C-Minor Mass. Apart from a soprano to be announced, the soloists are mezzo-soprano Susanne Mentzer, tenor Paul Groves, bass-baritone Nathan Berg, and French hornist Jerry Folsom. . . . ¶ March 14 at 3: John Adams's "Naïve and Sentimental Music," and excerpts from Prokofiev's "Romeo and Juliet" ballet score. (875-5030.)

Stonewall Chorale—Nancy Vang directs Fauré's Requiem, Kodály's Missa Brevis, and Kevin Oldham's "Boulding Chorales." (Calvary Episcopal Church, Park Ave. S. at 21st St. March 13 at 7:30. For information about tickets, call 971-5813.)

New York Choral Society—John Daly Goodwin directs John Adams's "Harmonium" and Orff's "Carmina Burana." (Carnegie Hall. March 13 at 8.)

I Cantori di New York—Mark Shapiro directs choral works by six American composers: Richard Busch, Janice Hamer, Jan Krzywicki, Scott Robinson, Bruce Stark, and David Vayo. (St. Peter's Church, Lexington Ave. at 54th St. March 13 at 8. Tickets at the door.)

New York Chamber Symphony—Gerard Schwarz leads Beethoven's "The Creatures of Prometheus" Overture and his Symphony No. 3, as well as the première of David Stock's "A Little Miracle" (featuring mezzo-soprano Viveca Genaux). (Alice Tully Hall. March 13-14 at 8. . . . ¶ **NOTE:** At press time, a strike by the orchestra's musicians appeared near a settlement; nonetheless, ticket holders may wish to check with the box office near the date of the concert.)

City Island Baroque Ensemble—Performing Bach's E-Major Violin Concerto (featuring Maria Bachmann) and his Fifth "Brandenburg" Concerto (with flutist Mindy Kaufman and harpsichordist Ilan Rechtman joining Ms. Bachmann in the spotlight). (Le Refuge Inn, 620 City Island Ave., City Island, the Bronx. 718-885-2478. March 14 at noon.)

BOOK CURRENTS

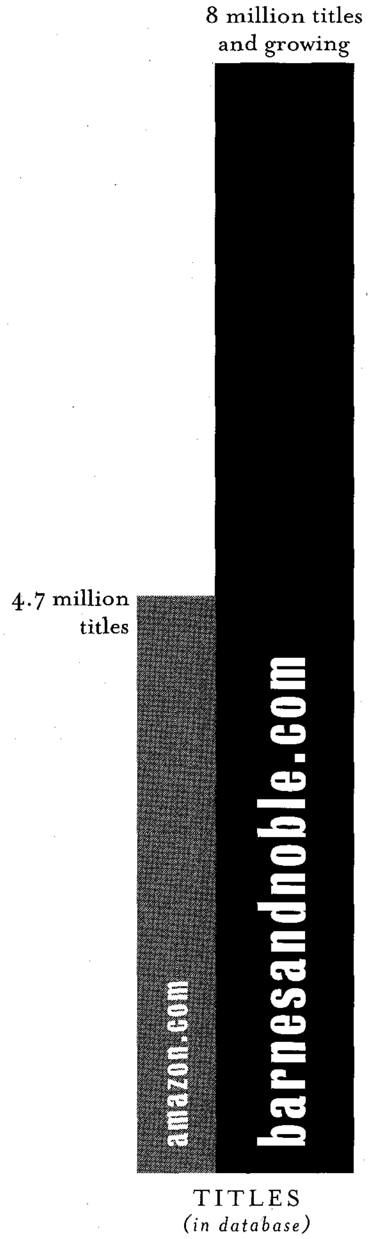
Stay Tuned

"SOMEONE left the cake out in the rain." If you've come within earshot of a radio in the past thirty years, you can probably finish the lyric whether you want to or not. The song in question is the oft-recorded "MacArthur Park," and its author is Jimmy Webb, who, in his recent book **Tunesmith** (Hyperion), shows that there's no easy recipe for the familiar, addictive poetry of popular song. Along with "Tunesmith," which weighs in on everything from harmonic substitution to rhyming dictionaries, a few other recent books about songwriters illuminate the mysteries of the craft.

CHRISTOPH NIEMANN

Webb points to Stephen Foster as the first king of American pop. **Doodah!**, originally published by Simon & Schuster and now out in paperback from Da Capo, is Ken Emerson's biography of Foster, the songwriter whose vision of nineteenth-century America—articulated in "Camptown Races," "Oh! Susanna," and "Old Folks at Home"—remains as vivid as any Nathaniel Hawthorne story. Foster took his cue from black minstrelsy, and black songwriters are the subject of **Spreadin' Rhythm Around** (Schirmer), by David A. Jasen and Gene Jones. From 1880 to 1930, African-American composers wrote everything from hits like "Ain't Misbehavin'" to obscure novelties like "If You Sheik on Your Mamma, Your Mamma's Gonna Sheba on You" and influenced mainstream Broadway writers, including Richard Rodgers (who grew up in Harlem). In **Richard Rodgers** (Yale), William G. Hyland traces the composer's dazzling career from "The Garrick Gaieties" to "Oklahoma!" to "The Sound of Music."

With tunes like "Alison" and "Accidents Will Happen," Elvis Costello has proved that acrobatic wordplay and sophisticated melodies have not been confined to Broadway. Tony Clayton-Lea's biography **Elvis Costello** (coming from Farrar, Straus & Giroux in April) finds the songwriter hard at work, collaborating with such heavyweights as Paul McCartney and Burt Bacharach. After all, songwriting is labor-intensive, or, as Webb writes, "Songwriting is Hell on Earth. If it isn't, then you're doing it wrong."



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Jerusalem Symphony Orchestra—David Shallon leads Shlomo Gronich's "Flute 3000" (featuring flutist Noam Buchman), Schumann's Piano Concerto (with Orli Shaham), Bartók's "The Miraculous Mandarin" Suite, and Stravinsky's "Firebird" Suite. (Whitman Theatre, Brooklyn Center for the Performing Arts, Brooklyn College. 718-951-4500. March 14 at 2.)

New York Collegium—Period-instrument performances of concerted works by Telemann, Handel, and others. (Colden Center, Queens College, Flushing. 718-793-8080. March 13 at 8. . . . ¶ Town Hall, 123 W. 43rd St. 840-2824. March 14 at 8.)

Jupiter Symphony—Jens Nygaard leads Haydn's Symphony No. 101 (the "Clock"), Liszt's Piano Concerto No. 2 (with William Wolfram), and Kile Smith's "Three Dances." (Good Shepherd Presbyterian Church, 152 W. 66th St. March 15 at 2 and 7 and March 16 at 8. For information about tickets, call 799-1259.)

Philadelphia Orchestra—Performing Mahler's Symphony No. 6, with Franz Welser-Möst on the podium. (Carnegie Hall. March 16 at 8.)

New York Concert Singers—Judith Clurman directs music inspired by the Book of Exodus, including pieces by Schubert and Philip Lasser. (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 996-1100. March 16 at 8.)

RECITALS

St. Luke's Chamber Ensemble—Performing four works by Haydn: his Variations in E-Flat Major (Hob. II:24, the manuscript of which resides in the Morgan Library's collection), "London" Flute Trio No. 1, G-Major Divertimento (Hob. II:1), and Scherzando No. 3. (Morgan Library, 29 E. 36th St. 685-0008, ext. 347. March 10 at 6:15.)

Bargemusic—Alban Gerhardt plays Bach's Cello Suite in D Major, violinist Nai Yuan Hu and pianist Nelson Padgett perform Strauss's Violin Sonata, and all three join for Mendelssohn's C-Minor Piano Trio. (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. 718-624-4061. March 11 at 7:30 and March 14 at 2.)

Los Angeles Philharmonic New Music Group—Esa-Pekka Salonen leads the ensemble in works by Silvestre Revueltas, William Kraft, Gerald Levinson, Leon Kirchner, and John Adams (his Chamber Symphony). (Alice Tully Hall. March 11 at 8.)

Ying String Quartet—The four siblings are joined by pianist Gilbert Kalish for a concert that comprises Beethoven's G-Major Quartet (Op. 18, No. 2) and piano quintets by David Diamond (a première) and Brahms. (Metropolitan Museum, Fifth Ave. at 83rd St. 570-3949. March 11 at 8.)

Cavani String Quartet—The foursome offers quartets by Boccherini, Bartók (his Third), and Brahms (in B-Flat Major). (Washington Irving High School, Irving Pl. at 16th St. March 13 at 8. For information about tickets, call 586-4680.)

Guarneri Quartet—Playing string quartets by Mozart (in C Major, K. 465, the "Dissonance"), Dvořák (in G Major, Op. 106), and Brahms (in A Minor). (Metropolitan Museum, Fifth Ave. at 83rd St. 570-3949. March 13 at 8.)

Auryn String Quartet—The German foursome plays quartets by Haydn (in E-Flat Major, Op. 71, No. 3) and Bartók (his Second), as well as Schubert's String Quintet (with cellist Natalia Khoma assisting). (Ukrainian Institute, 2 E. 79th St. 288-8660. March 13 at 8.)

Alexander String Quartet—The ensemble concludes its two-weekend survey of Beethoven's sixteen string quartets. March 14 at 11:25 A.M.: The Quartets No. 4, No. 10, and No. 7. . . . ¶ At 3: The Quartets No. 5 and No. 13, plus the "Grosse Fuge." . . . ¶ At 7:25: The Quartets No. 6, No. 11, and No. 14. (Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St. 501-3330.)

Orvieto Strings—A quartet from this ensemble plays string quartets by eighteenth- and nineteenth-century women: Maddalena Laura di Lombardini-Sirmen, Maria Theresia von Paradis, Zofia Zamoyska, and Fanny Mendelssohn-Hensel. (St. Peter's Church, Lexington Ave. at 54th St. March 14 at 2. Tickets at the door.)

Olga Borodina—The Russian mezzo-soprano performs songs by Tchaikovsky, Rachmaninoff, and Mussorgsky (his "Songs and Dances of Death"), with pianist Dmitri Yefimov assisting. (Alice Tully Hall. March 14 at 2.)

Suren Bagratuni and Sergei Babayan—Cellist and pianist, in a recital that includes sonatas by Debussy, Shostakovich, and Beethoven (his Third). (Weill Recital Hall. March 14 at 2.)

Rebel—The period-instrument chamber group, assisted by soprano Suzie Le Blanc, performs music from seventeenth-century Germany. (Corpus Christi Church, 529 W. 121st St. 666-9266. March 14 at 4.)

Harmonie Ensemble/New York—Performing Nino Rota's Nonet (with Steven Richman conducting), Leopold Godowsky III's String Quartet No. 1, and short works by Gershwin, Dvořák, and Ketil Hvoslef. (Madison Avenue Presbyterian Church, Madison Ave. at 73rd St. March 14 at 4. Tickets at the door.)

Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center—You would not normally think of a piece requiring forty-four performers as a specimen of chamber music. Messiaen's "From the Canyons to the Stars" calls for exactly those forces but, in true chamber-music style, assigns each player a distinct part. The twelve-movement "geological and astronomical work," as Messiaen called it, was inspired by a trip to Zion and Bryce Canyon National Parks in the early nineteen-seventies. Reinbert de Leeuw conducts. (Alice Tully Hall. March 14 at 5.)

Percussionists of the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra—James Levine leads the battery in Varèse's "Ionisation," in a concert that also includes pieces by Steve Reich, Herbert Brun, Charles Michael Udow, and Akira Nishimura. (Great Hall, Cooper Union, Third Ave. at 7th St. March 14 at 7. No tickets necessary.)

Beethoven's Songs—Though they pale in importance next to his sonatas, symphonies, and chamber masterpieces, Beethoven's solo songs represent the second-largest category of his output—outnumbered only by his folk-song settings for voice and piano trio. In this concert, soprano Ruth Golden, tenor Michael Philip Davis, and the Trio Parnassus perform a selection from both genres (including the song cycle "An die Ferne Geliebte") and the instrumentalists offer the composer's G-Major Piano Trio (Op. 1, No. 2). (This is the first of an intended annual recital series curated by mezzo-soprano Regina Resnik, who is Mr. Davis's mother.) (Kaye Playhouse, Hunter College, Park Ave. at 68th St. 772-4448. March 15 at 8.)

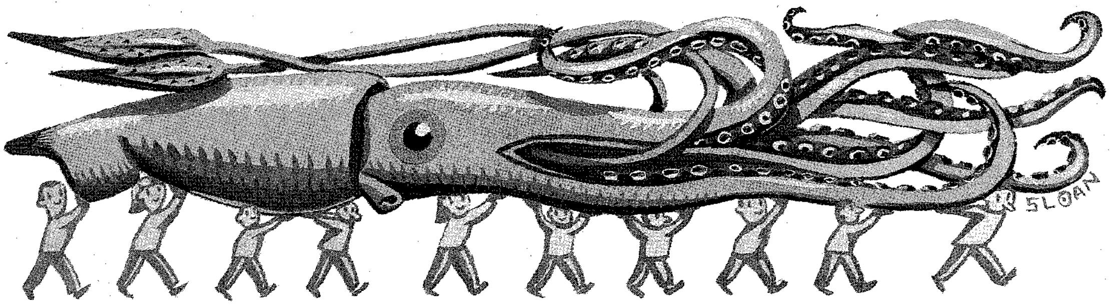
Seymour Lipkin—The pianist completes his two-season traversal of Beethoven's piano sonatas by performing the Sonatas No. 1, No. 18, No. 10, and No. 32. (Lang Recital Hall, Hunter College, Park Ave. at 68th St. 772-4448. March 16 at 7.)

ABOVE AND BEYOND

Cephalopods Unite—Giant squid have a reputation from their depiction in literature and the movies as vicious creatures that devour ships, whales, and anything else in their path. (Think of "Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea," in which the Nautilus barely escapes the sucker-lined tentacles of a twenty-five-foot monster.) In reality, though, no one knows how the giant squid behaves. That's because no one that we know of has ever seen one in action. Dead specimens have been studied, though—they've been found in fishermen's nets, washed up on shore, and in the stomachs of whales (the whale eats the squid, not the other way around). In an illustrated lecture on March 15 at 8, Richard Ellis, author of "The Search for the Giant Squid," delves into the lore surrounding the mollusk, offers his own theories about its habits, and talks about efforts in New Zealand to study the giant in its habitat. (Explorers Club, 46 E. 70th St. Tickets at the door.)

Readings—March 10 at 8: By Cambodian poet U Sam Oeur, from his collection, "Sacred Vows," and by Sherman Alexie, from his poetry. (St. Mark's In-the-Bouwerie, Second Ave. at 10th St. Tickets at the door.) . . . ¶ March 14 at 2: By poets Jane Cooper and Sharon Olds. (Wave Hill, 249th St. at Independence Ave., the Bronx. 718-549-3200, ext. 308.) . . . ¶ March 15 at 8: By Tom Wolfe, from his novel "A Man in Full." (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 996-1100.)

More Talks—March 10 at 6: Naima Rauam, a painter specializing in scenes of the New York City waterfront, describes what it's like to work in the middle of the night at the Fulton Fish Market. (South Street Seaport Museum, 209 Water St. 748-8600.) . . . ¶ March 14 at noon: *New Yorker* cartoon editor Robert Mankoff talks about his own brand of pointillistic cartoons. (Brooklyn Museum of Art, Eastern Parkway. 718-789-2493.) . . . ¶ March 16 at 6: Cynthia Heimel, author of "Sex Tips for Girls," discusses the modern woman. (Celeste Bartos Forum, New York Public Library, Fifth Ave at 42nd St. 930-0571.)



The deep: Richard Ellis delivers a lecture on the giant squid, at the Explorers Club.

MICHAEL SLOAN

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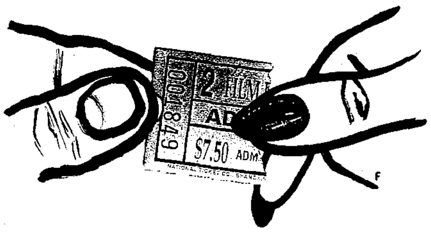


THE MOVIES

OPENING

Baby Geniuses—A comedy about a battle between a child psychiatrist and a two-year-old prodigy. Directed by Bob Clark; with Kathleen Turner. Opening March 12. (Criterion Center, 84th Street Sixplex, 64th and 2nd, and Village East Cinemas.)

The Corruptor—An action film about two N.Y.P.D. officers (Chow Yun-Fat and Mark Wahlberg) in Chinatown, directed by James Foley. Opening March 12. (84th Street Sixplex, Gotham Cinema, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, State, and Village Theatre VII.)

The Deep End of the Ocean—Reviewed below in Film Notes. Opening March 12.

Devil's Island—The story of an Icelandic family in the nineteen-fifties, directed by Fridrik Thor Fridriksson. In Icelandic. Opening March 12. (Angelika Film Center.)

The Harmonists—A feature film about the Comedian Harmonists, a popular German singing group of the late twenties and early thirties which was banned by the Nazis. Directed by Joseph Vilsmaier. In German. Opening March 12. (Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

The Rage: Carrie 2—A thriller about a telekinetic teen-ager (Emily Bergl), directed by Katt Shea. Opening March 12. (Criterion Center, 84th Street Sixplex, First & 62nd Cinemas, Orpheum VII, and Union Square.)

Wing Commander—A science-fiction adventure, based on a computer game, with Freddie Prinze, Jr., and directed by Chris Roberts. Opening March 12. (Chelsea Cinemas, Criterion Center, Park & 86th Street Cinemas, and Village East Cinemas.)

JIMMY LOU'S
LOUNGE

Opening March 12, Mark Wahlberg and Chow Yun-Fat in "The Corruptor."

TERRY MCELROY

FILM NOTES

(If a movie has been reviewed recently in The Current Cinema, the date of its review is given.)

Affliction—Nick Nolte, committing himself to a difficult part with a manly readiness that inspires affection, even awe, is Wade Whitehouse, a divorced policeman and hired hand floundering badly in a snowbound New Hampshire town. Both kindly and belligerent, Wade misses the meaning and rhythm of events, and reacts too much or too little, erupting in anger over what he should laugh off, ridiculing what he should take seriously. Writer-director Paul Schrader flinches at nothing and takes us deep into the texture and causes of this man's failure. With James Coburn as Wade's horrifying father, Willem Dafoe as his brother, Sissy Spacek as his girlfriend, and Mary Beth Hurt as his ex-wife. Schrader adapted Russell Banks's 1989 novel himself.—*David Denby* (1/11/99) (Angelika Film Center, Chelsea Cinemas, First & 62nd Street Cinemas, and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

Central Station—Against her nature, Dora (Fernanda Montenegro), an intelligent but nihilistic old bag—a retired schoolteacher who writes letters for illiterate people and then never mails them—leaves Rio de Janeiro with a little boy in tow and takes to the road. The boy's mother has been killed, and his desire to see his missing father stirs something in Dora. The two of them are practically hoboes, but once they leave Rio life opens up for them. This shrewd, tough, and bighearted Brazilian movie, directed by Walter Salles, moves surely and convincingly from utter negation to something like guarded optimism. In Portuguese.—*D.D.* (11/30/98) (BAM Rose Cinemas, Eastside Playhouse, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, and Quad Cinema.)

Children of Heaven—An Iranian boy, Ali (Amir Farrokh Hashemian), loses a pair of pink shoes in the streets of Teheran. The shoes belong to his younger sister, Zahra (Bahare Sediqi), who, because their family is poor, has no hope of getting replacements. For a while, the children share a single pair of sneakers; finally, Ali enters a long-distance footrace in an attempt to win another pair. At this point, Majid Majidi's slight and careful film veers into the hokey—the sight of Ali stumbling in slow motion across the finish line is pure, old-fashioned Hollywood. In Farsi.—*Anthony Lane* (2/15/99) (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

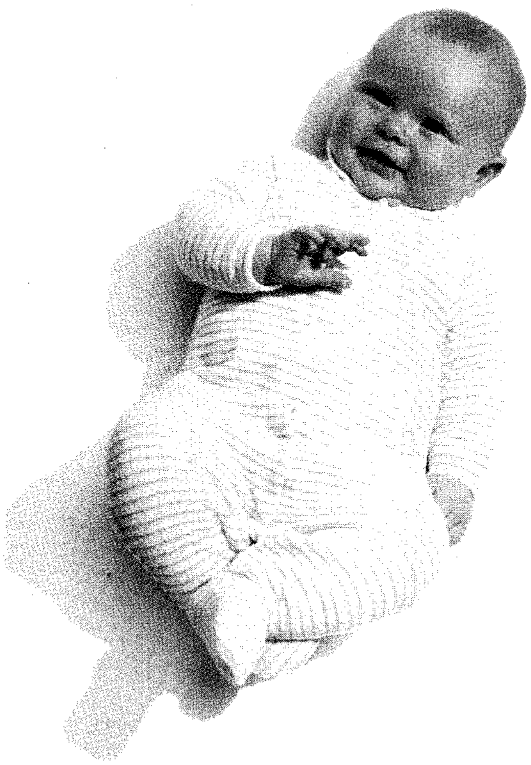
Dancemaker—Director Matthew Diamond profiles the American choreographer Paul Taylor, and the result is freer than the usual stolid arts documentary—rather like the instinctual, unpretentious style of Taylor's work itself. Interviews with Taylor and his dancers, shots of stop-and-go rehearsals, archive footage of Taylor as a lonely kid growing up on a farm, and stills of him as a star soloist with Martha Graham in the late fifties all amplify one theme: Taylor is an artist whose instrument is other artists. There's a poignant, uncomfortable intimacy to his creative process; watching his troupe at work over the years is like watching lovers come together and drift apart.—*Sarah Kerr* (Film Forum.)

The Deep End of the Ocean—Beth (Michelle Pfeiffer), a busy American mom, breaks the first law of child rearing and looks away from her three-year-old son in a crowded public room. The boy is snatched, and in the next few years the mom falls apart. The strongest thing in this adaptation of Jacquelyn Mitchard's best-seller, by Ulu Grosbard (director) and Stephen Schiff (screenwriter), is the portrait of Beth as a neurotically self-centered and self-dramatizing sufferer who, in her misery, makes life hell for everyone else. Pfeiffer digs into the role and won't let go. The rest of the movie is conventionally earnest, and when the boy shows up again, nine years later, and doesn't remember anything, the gimmickry at the heart of Mitchard's story begins to overwhelm us. With Treat Williams as the sturdy but rather dim father, Ryan Merriman as the returnee at the age of twelve, and Whoopi Goldberg, looking for a reason to be in the movie, as a kindly police detective. The obtrusive music is by Elmer Bernstein.—*D.D.* (Criterion Center, Lincoln Square, Murray Hill Cinemas, 19th Street East 6, 64th and 2nd, and Village Theatre VII; starting March 12.)

Desert Victory (1943)—With swiftness, braininess, and panoramic sweep, Roy Boulting's documentary transcends propaganda even while it celebrates the British defeat of Rommel in North Africa. Few movies have laid out the logistical preparations, the strategy, and the ground and air conduct of a campaign as lucidly as Boulting does here. Fewer still have matched Boulting's skill at conveying the stink and feel of battle without having it overwhelm the narrative or undermine an intelligent treatment of the issues. He's as deft at orchestrating a huge nocturnal barrage as he is at tracking three soldiers who are tapping for mines and who pause only to inspect a corpse. James Agee called it "unquestionably the best film of the year."—*Michael Sragow* (Museum of Modern Art; March 13.)

8mm—When a big Hollywood picture starts courting the movie buffs in the audience, it must be in trouble; when it starts with a shot of a movie projector and boasts a hero called Welles, hold your nose. This grim new work from Joel Schumacher takes itself so seriously that there were reports of frivolous laughter in the theatres. The Welles in question, played by Nicolas Cage, is a private detective who is asked to watch a snuff movie and to find out just how snuffy it is—whether a young woman was actually killed onscreen. His quest leads him to Los Angeles and New York, and to a slow crawl through the belly of the porno industry. The problem here is not that Schumacher's approach is exploitative but that it's boring; poor Catherine Keener, playing Welles's wife, has the thankless task of sitting at home waiting for her man to call with yet more recitations of gloom. The usually sprightly Cage seems locked and barred; the only fun comes when he teams up with Joaquin Phoenix, a bemused observer of the hard-core scene. But not even Phoenix can save a film that solemnly fulfills everything you guessed in the first ten minutes.—*A.L.* (3/8/99) (Chelsea Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, Olympia, Orpheum VII, 64th and 2nd, State, Union Square, and Waverly.)

Elizabeth—A grisly, flamboyant account of the Virgin Queen's early days as a monarch. Screenwriter Michael Hirst alters and conflates events that took place over many years—by degrees, Elizabeth (Cate Blanchett), a Protestant surrounded by powerful Catholics, takes control of England by pulling off a kind of internal coup d'état. The means of her ascension is Sir Francis Walsingham (Geoffrey Rush), a perfect Machiavellian character who serves the Queen as adviser, deadly assassin, and spy. Elizabeth's climb to power, however, is a personal disaster: the supple-waisted maiden with long



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red hair becomes stiff and harsh, emerging from her youth white-faced and trapped in the armor of a thick brocade dress. The movie is a horror film masquerading as a historical pageant. Directed by Shekhar Kapur.—*D.D.* (11/16/98) (BAM Rose Cinemas, Chelsea West, 84th Street Sixplex, First & 62nd Cinemas, and Union Square.)

Hilary and Jackie—Anand Tucker's film takes us through the politely fraught story of the cellist Jacqueline du Pré and her sister Hilary. We see them first as young girls, and follow their rivalry; Hilary, the sensible flutist, is gradually outstripped by her more impassioned sister. The sense of period, of ungainly English pride, is funny and acute, but the movie mislays its sense of wit as the girls grow up. The nub of the tale, in which the now famous Jackie (Emily Watson) starts up a rural threesome with Hilary (Rachel Griffiths) and Hilary's husband, Kiffer Finzi (David Morrissey), feels both overblown and oddly beside the point; it certainly means that Tucker takes his eye, or his ear, off the music.—*A.L.* (1/18/99) (BAM Rose Cinemas, Chelsea Cinemas, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, and Union Square.)

Life Is Beautiful—Would that it were. The great, donkey-faced Italian clown Roberto Benigni attempts an ambitious fable of comedy's redemptive power. He plays an Italian Jew who keeps alive his little boy's innocence in a Nazi concentration camp by pretending that the routines of the camp are no more than an intricate game staged for his son's benefit. But Benigni's ironic counter-reality undermines this movie, not the Nazis, who were beyond ridicule for the same reason that they were beyond rationality. Totalitarianism makes the fantastic literal—that is its demonic appeal. Benigni's jokes and games just aren't enough, and you leave the movie thinking that what's touching is not Benigni's ministrations to the little boy but his own need to believe in comedy as salvation. With Giorgio Cantarini, who has the heartbreaking quality of the children in the old neorealist movies, as the boy. In Italian.—*D.D.* (11/16/98 and 3/15/99) (Angelika Film Center, 84th Street Sixplex, Murray Hill Cinemas, 19th Street East 6, Paris, Park & 86th Street Cinemas, and 72nd Street East.)

Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels—This début film from Guy Ritchie, a young English writer and director, was a big hit in Britain, though it's hard to see why. Four London lads owe half a million pounds to a man with the subtle sobriquet of Hatchet Harry. Learning of an upcoming drug theft, they lie in wait and rob the robbers; all goes well until their fence, Nick the Greek (Stephen Marcus), unwittingly tries to sell the drugs back to the very person who owned them in the first place. It's a neat twist in a nicely wrapped plot; if only the rest of his flimsy film lived up to it. Ritchie has previously shot commercials, and he can't begin to shake the habit; he treats the camera as a decorative toy—something you spin around at the first threatening hint of normality. Thank heaven, then, for Vinnie Jones, who plays a debt collector called Big Chris. Jones used to be a soccer player of fearsome repute, and he still stares at other men as if deciding where exactly to kick them.—*A.L.* (3/8/99) (First & 62nd Cinemas, Lincoln Square, and Village Theatre VII.)

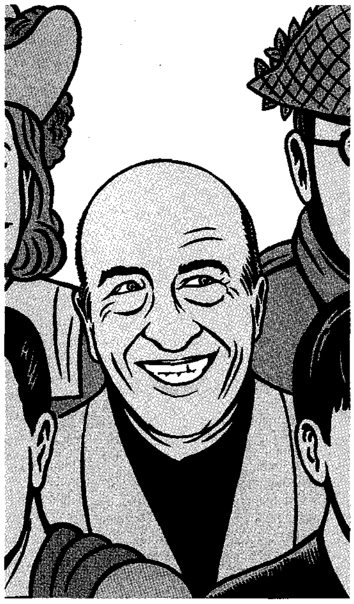
October Sky—An inspirational story of a fairly conventional sort—four boys stuck in a West Virginia coal town in 1957 begin playing around with rockets and compete for a science prize—has been made into something square but stirring by filmmakers who get the look and shape of things right. The skies are gray, and a wrought-iron tipple sits at the mouth of the mine like a gallows. The boys, expected by their elders to sacrifice their lives to coal mining when they graduate from high school, escape by sending up the little projectiles they've made, which sometimes explode, sometimes whirl about in circles, and occasionally soar straight up; when that happens, director Joe Johnston, imitating Steven Spielberg, makes the awestruck spectators rise into the frame, mouths open, eyes wide. The little rockets become the poetry of a depressed community. With Jake Gyllenhaal as the leader of the boys and the leathery, serious Chris Cooper as his heroic dad. Screenwriter Lewis Colick adapted the recent memoir "Rocket Boys," by retired NASA engineer Homer Hickam, Jr.—*D.D.* (2/22 & 3/1/99) (Beekman, Lincoln Square, 19th Street East 6, Park & 86th Street Cinemas, 34th Street Showplace, and Village East Cinemas.)

The Red House (1947)—Edward G. Robinson's audacious performance as a haunted, one-legged farmer builds like nothing else he (or anyone) ever did; he's a quick-thinking yet slow-moving monster, wresting himself from the primordial muck before tragically sinking back in. The movie starts with a sunny overview of backwoods life, but its onionlike plot has a core of sexual frustration and murder. Judith Anderson is the sister who has tried to guard Robinson's secrets, and Allene Roberts is the adopted daughter who inadvertently uncovers them. Delmer Daves wrote and directed, awkwardly but with conviction; his handling of the daughter's psychic connection to the red house in the deep woods suggests a horror-film version of "The Secret Garden."—*M.S.* (Museum of Modern Art; March 11.)

Rushmore—Wes Anderson's smart, refreshing picture is all about Max Fischer (Jason Schwartzman), who is in the tenth grade at Rushmore Academy—or, to put it in Max's own terms, in heaven. He runs everything from the school beekeepers to the rather ambitious theatre group; he hangs out with Mr. Blume (Bill Murray), the father of a pair of schoolmates; and, although his grades are woeful, he compensates by falling in love with a teacher, Miss Cross (Olivia Williams). Blume, too, falls in love with Miss Cross, and from here on, Max's world starts to come apart at the seams—not that you would know it from his big, blank, bespectacled face. The whole movie marks the triumph of the deadpan; Schwartzman is cautious but stubbornly optimistic, while Murray is possessed by the mania of near-despair, but neither kicks up much of a fuss. What could have been merely arch or wacky turns into something more touching—a mature riff on the absurdity of growing up.—*A.L.* (12/7-14/98) (Chelsea Cinemas, Lincoln Square, Murray Hill Cinemas, State, Sutton, and Union Square.)

The School of Flesh—For his new movie, Benoît Jacquot, best known for "A Single Girl," has set a Yukio Mishima novel in present-day Paris. The transplant is all too successful; the whole thing feels French to its fingertips. French cinema has long thrived on the romantic mismatch, and in this case it's Older Woman meets Younger Man; to be precise, we get the uptight businesswoman (Isabelle Huppert) letting her hair down for the sake of a poor bartender (Vincent Martinez), who has a colorful sexual record and no morals to speak of. If this were a Hollywood production, the hustling youth would find true love in return; the strength of Jacquot's take on the affair is that he is prepared to show his lovers not changing, or skirting change and then pulling back in fear. Only in bed do the two leads understand each other, and sometimes not even there. Word has it that French viewers thought there was too little sex in the movie; American viewers may think there's too much. *Vive la différence.* In French.—*A.L.* (BAM Rose Cinemas, Cinema Village, and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

Shakespeare in Love—A ripely emotional comedy-fantasia—concocted by director John Madden and screenwriters Marc Norman and Tom Stoppard—of how Shakespeare came to write "Romeo and Juliet." In 1593, young Will (Joseph Fiennes), a stud with liquid eyes and full lips, is just an unhappy and unproductive hack, jealous of the greater Christopher Marlowe (Rupert Everett). At first the movie comes at us too broadly, with many facetiously anachronistic jokes about the grubby professional routines of the theatre. But Will falls in love with the fictional heiress Viola de Lesseps (Gwyneth Paltrow), and when these two poeticizing lovers climb into bed, and Shakespeare's quill begins to fly, the cleverness catches fire and "Shakespeare in Love" turns into an exciting literary-erotic entertainment. With Geoffrey Rush as the theatre manager Henslowe and Judi Dench as a supremely intelligent and wittily dominating Queen Elizabeth.—*D.D.* (12/21/98) (Angelika Film Center, Chelsea Cinemas, Cinema II, Cinema 3rd Avenue, Criterion Center, Lincoln Square, Olympia, Orpheum VII, and 34th Street Showplace.)



OPEN-FIELD RUNNER: *Richard Lester both perfected and popularized the quicksilver style of shooting and editing which dominated cutting-edge moviemaking in the sixties. If teenagers said they felt transformed after watching "A Hard Day's Night," that wasn't just because of the Beatles' liberating cheekiness. It was also because of the bold way that Lester shot the Fab Four, whether they were capering onstage or zigzagging through an open field. Stacy Cochran's salute to the director, jubilantly entitled "Richard Lester!" (March 13 at the American Museum of the Moving Image), consists of an interview with Lester that she conducted, yes, in an open field. Whether saluting John Lennon's inspirational truth-telling (Lester also directed him in "Help!" and "How I Won the War") or describing how, "just for fun," he and Peter Sellers made "The Running, Jumping, and Standing Still Film" (in an open field!), Lester conveys a freewheeling, iconoclastic intelligence. Although he defines his ultrafast working method as "panic masquerading as exuberance," this film testifies to Lester's blithe fearlessness.*

MICHAEL KUPPERMAN

200 Cigarettes—Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. (East 85th Street, Lincoln Square, New York Twin, 19th Street East 6, State, and Village Theatre VII.)

ALSO PLAYING

analyze this: Coronet Cinemas, Criterion Center, Lincoln Square, Metro Cinema, Murray Hill Cinemas, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, and Village Theatre VII. . . . **cruel intentions:** Chelsea Cinemas, Criterion Center, First & 62nd Cinemas, Lincoln Square, Orpheum VII, and Union Square. . . . **god said, "ha!":** Film Forum. . . . **just the ticket:** Criterion Center, First & 62nd Cinemas, Lincoln Square, and Union Square. . . . **the last days:** 62nd & Broadway. . . . **message in a bottle** (2/22 & 3/1/99): Lincoln Square, Orpheum VII, 64th and 2nd, and Union Square. . . . **office space:** Chelsea Cinemas, Criterion Center, Lincoln Square, and 64th and 2nd. . . . **the other sister:** Chelsea West, Cinema I, Guild, Lincoln Square, Murray Hill Cinemas, and Village East Cinemas. . . . **payback** (2/15/99): Astor Plaza, 84th Street Sixplex, New York Twin, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, 34th Street Showplace, and Village Theatre VII. . . . **saving private ryan** (8/3/98): First & 62nd Cinemas and Union Square. . . . **a simple plan:** Chelsea Cinemas, Lincoln Square, Metro Cinema, and Village Theatre VII. . . . **six ways to sunday:** Angelika Film Center. . . . **tango:** BAM Rose Cinemas, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, and Village East Cinemas. . . . **the thin red line** (12/28/98 & 1/4/99): Union Square and Ziegfeld. . . . **20 dates:** Union Square.

THEATRE ADDRESSES

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(For show times, call 777-FILM, except where noted.)

Angelika Film Center, 18 W. Houston St.
Astor Plaza, 44th St. at Broadway.
BAM Rose Cinemas, 30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn (718-623-2770).
Beekman, Second Ave. at 66th St.
Chelsea Cinemas, 260 W. 23rd St.
Chelsea West, 333 W. 23rd St.
Cinema I, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema II, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema 3rd Avenue, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema Village, 22 E. 12th St. (924-3363).
Coronet Cinemas, Third Ave. at 59th St.
Criterion Center, Broadway at 44th St.
East 85th Street, First Ave. at 85th St.
Eastside Playhouse, Third Ave. at 55th St.
84th Street Sixplex, Broadway at 84th St.
86th Street East Twin, Third Ave. at 86th St.
59th Street East Cinema, 239 E. 59th St.
Film Forum, W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110).
First & 62nd Cinemas, 400 E. 62nd St.
Gotham Cinema, Third Ave. at 58th St.
Guild, 33 W. 50th St.
Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, Broadway at 63rd St.
Lincoln Square, Broadway at 68th St.
Metro Cinema 1 and 2, Broadway at 99th St.
Murray Hill Cinemas, 160 E. 34th St.
New York Twin, Second Ave. at 67th St.
19th Street East 6, Broadway at 19th St.
Olympia I and II, Broadway at 107th St.
Orpheum VII, Third Ave. at 86th St.
Paris, 4 W. 58th St. (688-3800).
Park & 86th Street Cinemas, 125 E. 86th St.
Quad Cinema, 34 W. 13th St.
The Screening Room, 54 Varick St. (334-2100).
62nd & Broadway, 62 W. 62nd St.
64th and 2nd, Second Ave. at 64th St.
72nd Street East, Third Ave. at 71st St.
State, Broadway at 45th St.
Sutton 1 and 2, Third Ave. at 57th St.
34th Street Showplace, 238 E. 34th St.
Union Square, Broadway at 13th St.
Village East Cinemas, Second Ave. at 12th St.
Village Theatre VII, Third Ave. at 11th St.
Waverly 1 and 2, Sixth Ave. at 3rd St.
Worldwide Cinemas, 50th St. between Eighth and Ninth Aves.
Ziegfeld, 141 W. 54th St.

REVIVALS, CLASSICS, ETC.

(Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.)

Film Forum 2, W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110)—A program of films directed by Alfred Hitchcock. March 10: "Saboteur" (1942). . . . March 11: "Topaz" (1969). . . . March 12-13: "The Birds" (1963). . . . March 14-15: "Frenzy" (1972). . . . March 16: "Torn Curtain" (1966).

Museum of Modern Art, Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (708-9480)—A program of films featuring Edward G. Robinson. March 11 at 2:30: "The Red House" (†). . . . March 11 at 6: "Double Indemnity" (1944, Billy Wilder). . . . March 12 at 2:30: "The Hole in the Wall" (1929, Robert Florey). . . . March 13 at 1: "Unholy Partners" (1941, Mervyn LeRoy). . . . March 13 at 3: "Scarlet Street" (1946, Fritz Lang). . . . March 13 at 5 and March 16 at 2:30: "The Whole Town's Talking" (1935, John Ford). . . . March 14 at 1: "The Ten Commandments" (1956, Cecil B. De Mille). . . . March 14 at 5 and March 15 at 2:30: "Tiger Shark" (1932, Howard Hawks). . . . March 15 at 6: "Smart Money" (1931, Alfred E. Green). . . . March 16 at 6: "The Hatchet Man" (1932, William Wellman) and "East Is West" (1930, Monta Bell). . . . ¶ March 11 at 6, March 12 at 6 and 8, and March 13-14 at 1, 3, and 5: Nine different programs in a series of British documentary short films, including "Desert Victory" (†), showing March 13 at 1. . . . ¶ March 11 at 6: Two films by Vivienne Dick. . . . ¶ March 12 at 7: A program of cartoons by Chuck Jones, who will be present.

Walter Reade Theatre, Lincoln Center (875-5600)—A series about production and costume design, with film showings and appearances by the designers themselves. March 11 at 3:30: "Bram Stoker's Dracula" (1992, Francis Ford Coppola). Costume designer Eiko Ishioka will appear March 10 at 6. . . . March 11 at 4: "Working Girl" (1988, Mike Nichols). Production designer Patrizia von Brandenstein will appear March 10 at 8. . . . March 11 at 8:30: "I Shot Andy Warhol" (1996, Mary Harron). Production designer Thérèse DePrez will appear March 11 at 6:30. . . . ¶ A program of new films from France; in French, with English subtitles. March 12 at 2 and 6:40 and March 14 at 9:20: "L'Ennui" (Cédric Kahn). . . . March 12 at 4:30 and 9:20 and March 13 at 2: "Class Trip" (Claude Miller). . . . March 13 at 4:15 and March 15 at 4 and 8:30: "Only God Sees Me" (Bruno Podalydès). . . . March 13 at 6:45, March 14 at 2, and March 16 at 4: "Luck or Coincidence" (Claude Lelouch). . . . March 13 at 9:20, March 14 at 4:30, and March 16 at 2: "Sombre" (Philippe Grandrieux). . . . March 14 at 7 and March 15 at 2 and 6:15: "The New Eve" (Catherine Corsini).

American Museum of the Moving Image, 35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (718-784-0077)—A program of films directed by or about Richard Lester. March 13 at 2: "The Bed-Sitting Room" (1969). . . . March 13 at 3:45: "Richard Lester!" (†). . . . March 13 at 4:30: "Robin and Marian" (1976). . . . March 14 at 2: "Petulia" (1968). . . . March 14 at 4: "A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum" (1966).

Florence Gould Hall, 55 E. 59th St. (355-6160)—March 16 at 12:30, 3:30, 6:30, and 9: "Marius et Jeannette" (1997, Robert Guédiguian; in French).

A Different Light Bookstore, 151 W. 19th St.—A Sunday-night series of free films (and popcorn). On March 14 at 7, the feature will be "Frogs" (1972, George McCowan).

Cinema Village, 22 E. 12th St. (924-3363)—A program of seven films about the last days of the millennium, by seven different directors. March 12-18: "The Hole" (Tsai Ming Liang; Taiwan), "The Wall" (Alain Berliner; Belgium), and "The First Night of My Life" (Miguel Albaladejo; Spain).

59th Street East Cinema, 239 E. 59th St.—Through March 11: The 15th Annual Israel Film Festival. (For information about show times, call 532-2075.)

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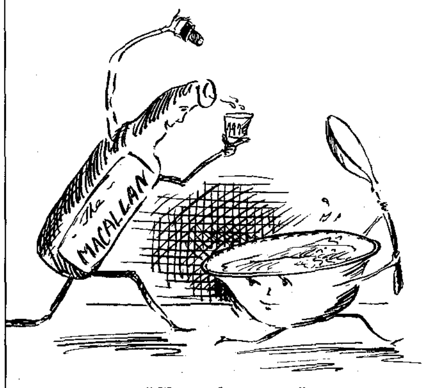

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THE NEW YORKER

THE TALK OF THE TOWN

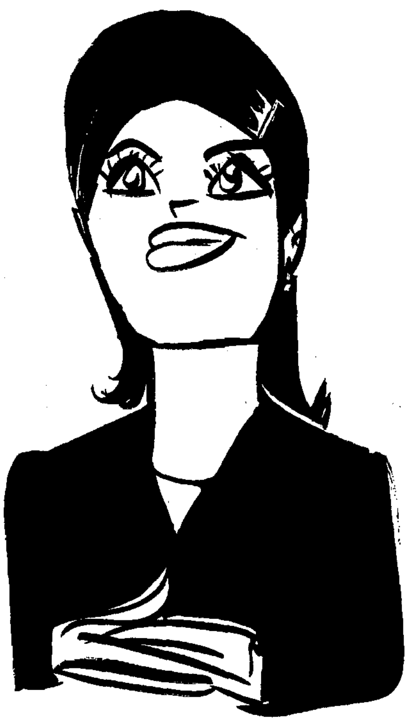
COMMENT

Thoroughly modern Monica.

As Monica Lewinsky's weirdly giggly recollections on ABC last week demonstrated, getting summoned to the Oval Office for a surprise one-on-one can be a pretty dizzying experience for a girl. Consider the following account of such an occurrence: "I sat down on a red couch next to [the President's] chair and he asked if I would like a Fresca. At the time, I'd never heard of this soft drink and thought wildly that it might be the name of a new dance, but I said yes anyway. . . . Our conversation had been so disarmingly friendly that I felt courageous enough when it ended to say, 'Mr. President, do you suppose [I] can ask to kiss a president? . . . I've had such a splendid time, and I would like to kiss you on the cheek.'"

The President in question was Lyndon Johnson, and his flirtatious would-be dance partner was Barbara Walters, who happened to be at the White House researching a story on Lady Bird Johnson for the "Today Show." The record is silent as to whether Johnson was a good kisser: his response to Walters' batting eyelashes, as she described it in her 1970 book, "How to Talk with Practically Anybody About Practically Anything," was kindly yet firm. "'Barbara,' he said, 'that's like those unpleasant bills in Congress. I like the motion, but I don't like the rules.'"

Last week, Walters demonstrated that her conversational skills have become more refined over the decades. (For the revised edition, a chapter on how to get a girl young enough to be your granddaughter to describe phone sex: feign simultaneous ignorance and fascination.) In sharp contrast to the adolescent fumblings of the congressional delegate Ed Bryant, who quizzed Lewinsky in February, Walters' questioning took the form of a smooth seduction: she drew Lewinsky out about how she thonged the President and what followed thereafter, and inquired elliptically if Lewinsky had experienced the spasm that dare not speak its name. "It's a dance," the dissonantly playful Lewinsky told Walters, speaking of her initial flirtation with the President. Who knew there was quite so much light-footedness in the Oval Office?



At the White House, Lewinsky appears to have worked from the same playbook as the young Barbara Walters in attempting to leverage her charm. But much has happened to change the lives of women in the interval between Walters' banter with Johnson and Lewinsky's lap-dancing antics with Clinton, not least women's sexual lives. Lewinsky is, generationally speaking, the offspring of the feminist movement, the lip-glossed proof that those who start a revolution cannot control what it may later become.

The claim to sexual pleasure is part of it: Lewinsky's unashamed affirmation of her "sensuality" is progress of a kind, though her apparent need for a married man to unleash it is regrettable. Lewinsky's most dramatic inheritance from the feminist movement, however, is that of legal abortion. "Monica's Story" says that Lewinsky had an abortion in 1996, after becoming pregnant during a brief relationship with a Pentagon co-worker. The book was published on the same day last week that Justice Harry Blackmun, the author of Roe v. Wade, died. Blackmun had been accused of genocide for his part in securing abortion rights for women; a quarter-century after the decision, Lewinsky, who thought of herself as "a sassy, liberal-minded West Coast girl [who] would sail through the operation," seems to have exercised her right as if it were as banal a procedure as getting her highlights done. (Afterward, she discovered that it wasn't, and was sufficiently depressed by her experience to enter therapy.)

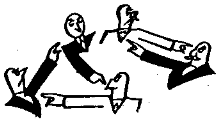
"Monica's Story" also reveals that Lewinsky's erratic attorney, William Ginsburg, suggested that she take advantage of another feminist legislative innovation: he wanted her to accuse Bill Clinton of sexual harassment. This option Monica declined to exploit, on the admirable ground that no such thing had happened. Still, the notion that a woman might counter sexual advances with legal action is one that would hardly have occurred to the readers of Barbara Walters' book when it first appeared. In one passage, Walters offers advice about how to deal with a lecher-

ILLUSTRATIONS BY TOM BACHTELL

ous man intent on making a pass. "First of all, don't take him seriously," she counsels. "Unless you are alone on the sixth fairway at two in the morning—and how did you get there anyway?—you can't get raped. My own opinion is that there's far too little flirtation in our country as is. . . . So be grateful. Even a man known to be on the prowl has *some* taste, and he picked you." Lewinsky, by her own admission, was a woman on the prowl: while Walters' putative reader was obliged to be a coquette, Lewinsky chose to be one. Between Walters' 1970 book and her 1999 interview with Lewinsky came feminism; Lewinsky's aggressive assertion of her freedom to flirt, and her obliviousness of all that has been fought and won on her behalf, is feminism's unsought victory. —REBECCA MEAD

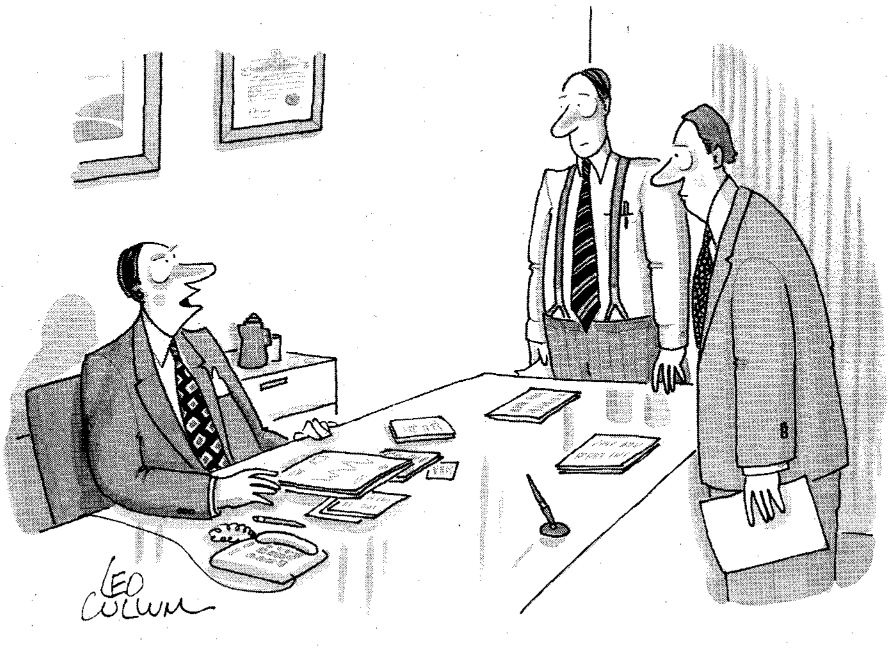
INK

Hitch the (alleged) Snitch goes home to face the enemy.



As clear-the-air meetings go, the one last Thursday morning at *The Nation's* spiffy new offices, on Irving Place, got off to an unpromising start. Christopher Hitchens, the magazine's sartorially challenged but verbally gifted political columnist, who recently outraged many of his colleagues by offering House impeachment managers his testimony about private conversations with his erstwhile friend the White House aide Sidney Blumenthal, walked into the eighth-floor conference room with his current friend David Rieff. Rieff laid a tape recorder on the table. The device was there, Hitchens told the assembled staff, because he expected to see "malicious stuff" written about the gathering.

Where Hitchens, who was sporting his usual lapel button, which reads "All the Right Enemies," got this idea is unclear. True, *The Nation* did publish an editorial attacking him for signing the now famous affidavit, which said that Blumenthal (who once worked for *The New Yorker*) had referred to Monica Lewinsky as a "stalker." True, when Hitchens wrote a column defending his action, Katha Pollitt, a fellow *Nation* columnist, wrote a piece in the same issue demolishing it. And, true, Alexander Cockburn, another *Nation* veteran, described Hitchens, in the *New York Press*, as "a Judas and a snitch," who "liked to have it both ways." But that is the sort of thing that happens in any family argument—especially when the family is what remains of New York's left-wing intelligentsia. As the meeting began, Katrina vanden Heuvel, the magazine's editor, told Hitchens that she was glad to see him back in the office. "If you're glad I'm here, then the pleasure is all yours," Hitchens replied.

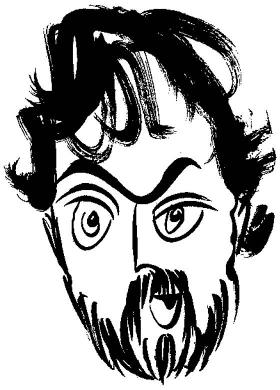


"We need to investigate a stupidity cluster in accounting."

With Pollitt sitting a few seats to his right (Cockburn, who lives in California, didn't show up), Hitchens embarked on one of his trademark monologues about Bill Clinton, his toadies in the press, and his own editors, who, he claimed, had fed Pollitt material to use against him. He expounded at length on the White House's treatment of Kathleen Willey. Turning to Cockburn's vitriolic attack, he defined a snitch as somebody who "drops an anonymous dime" motivated by vengeance or personal gain, and he insisted that he had had nothing to gain by signing his affidavit.

Most members of *The Nation's* staff were unmoved by Hitchens' stirring display. "You're trying to make this as though you were being called up before some politburo," Pollitt complained. "Is it a principle to betray a friend?" JoAnn Wypijewski, an editor who is friendly with Cockburn, interjected. Even Hitchens' rough treatment at the hands of his fellow-columnists elicited little sympathy, though one writer, Bruce Shapiro, did speak up on his behalf. Eric Alterman, a longtime friend of Hitchens, also made some sympathetic comments, but added, "As someone who has been viciously attacked in the magazine by columnists . . . and who has complained to the editors about this, I know that that's just the way it works in this place." Perish the thought, but some *Nation* staffers thought their man in Washington was being deliberately provocative, and not just because he lit up two cigarettes. "I am very grateful to Judge Starr. I don't know one wrong thing he's done yet," Hitchens said at one point, adding that Bob Barr, the Clinton-bashing Georgia congressman, was "in many ways quite a good guy."

Eventually, the meeting got sidetracked into a heated debate about feminism. Pollitt had published, but later retracted, a claim that Hitchens once referred to women as "douche bags." The testy exchange stopped only when Victor Navasky, *The Nation's* publisher and editorial director, seconded Hitchens' suggestion that there henceforth be a moratorium on the entire "douche bag" issue. Drawing the meeting to a close, the veteran editor urged both sides to agree that, despite their political differences, they respected each other and could go on from there. Hitchens demurred, criticizing Navasky for failing to support him in the press. He and the magazine had had differences before, Hitchens said, but in those cases *The Nation* hadn't felt "obliged to disown me in public." With that, he got up and left, taking his tape recorder and his friend with him. It wasn't clear whether he was going to quit or not. In fact, only one thing was clear: the douche-bag moratorium. —JOHN CASSIDY



Christopher Hitchens

NERDFILE

Playing the numbers racket on Amazon.com.

ONE of the guilty pleasures available to browsers of the Internet is roaming through Amazon.com, the on-line bookseller, and noting the sales rankings that are attached to each title. The company updates the listings of its top ten thousand sellers hourly, and its top hundred thousand titles are reordered once a day. You can concoct a delightfully jumbled scorecard that pulls together books that would otherwise have nothing to do with one another: one day recently, "Valley of the Dolls" was well ahead of "War and Peace," 4,444 to 7,804, and sworn enemies Lillian Hellman and Mary McCarthy were nearly side by side ("Pentimento" was at 72,809, "The Group" at 73,473); on another day, "Shakespeare in Love: The Love Poetry of William Shakespeare" was whomping Folger's "Shakespeare's Sonnets and Poems," 1,732 to 187,912.

How ephemeral are these rankings? A couple of months ago, in his column posted on TheStreet.com, the hedge-fund manager James J. Cramer made a passing reference to a 1991 book entitled "The Walls Around Us," by David Owen. Cramer referred to a passage in which Owen compares the jockeying of Internet companies today to the competition between Edison and Tesla over electrical systems a century ago. Owen's book is not about electricity or the Internet or the stock market; it is a ruminative look at home improvement. Still, Cramer's column provided a link to Amazon.com, and readers started buying the book. Within two days, Owen saw his eight-year-old book climb from somewhere in the thirty thousands to 166. How many copies were actually sold? Owen doesn't know, but he says he's sure it wasn't a lot. "Not, say, a Grisham number," he told me.

So just what does it take to make a book move in Amazon.com's system? To answer that question, a scientific test was conducted: a musty classic was selected, and one copy of the book was purchased every day for a week. The book used in the test, Thomas Carlyle's 1837 work, "The French Revolution," was chosen because it seemed unlikely to be made suddenly popular by a stray mention in a Liz Smith column or on "Dawson's Creek."

On the Monday that the test began, "The French Revolution" stood at 92,010. The next day, after our first purchase, it went to 77,392. We kept buying. On Wednesday, the book hit 69,967; on Thursday, 62,741; on Friday, 57,982. On Saturday we forgot to log on, and obviously neglected to make a purchase, but on Sunday the book was at 54,362. We bought another copy.

That Sunday, as it happened, was Super Bowl Sunday. Perhaps fewer people than usual were buying books on-line that day, because on Monday "The French Revolution" had shot up to 2,923. In the space of a week, with a mere six purchases and the help of what will almost certainly be the year's most highly rated television extravaganza, Thomas Carlyle's thickish history jumped more than eighty-nine thousand places.

That was the high point. After we ordered another copy, on Monday, the book dropped to 39,338 on Tuesday, and later buys failed to pull it out of the thirty thousands. A final attempt to jolt the standings—buying five copies at once—moved the book only to 33,619.

A call to Beth Garson, an Amazon publicist, helped clarify the process a bit. After listening to the details of our scheme, she pulled up the sales figures for "The French Revolution." Although she said that she was forbidden to disclose them, she did explain that "at the higher numbers on the list an incremental difference can have a big impact." She added that the actual recent sales figure for "The French Revolution" was "a relatively small number." Then, looking at the dates, she said, "Hmm. I can see your traffic pattern."

When the royalty check comes, Mr. Carlyle, you know whom to thank. —JAMIE MALANOWSKI

WIND ON CAPITOL HILL

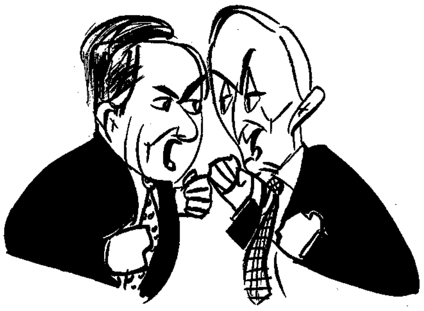
New Jersey Democrats run amok.

POLITICS is getting more and more like kindergarten, except that in politics there's no one to enforce a time-out. Consider, for instance, the two senators from New Jersey. They are both Democrats, and they both look like adults. One of them even has white hair. But at a private Democratic retreat held last week at the Library of Congress a long-standing feud between the two men flared into the sort of belligerent peevishness that is usually reserved for the school yard. The only difference is that the language was worse.

The relationship between Bob Torricelli, the junior senator from the state, and Frank Lautenberg, his senior colleague, has always been chilly at best. The Lautenberg camp regards Torricelli as a scene-stealing media hog—a kind of kid brother from hell. "Torricelli people are trouble-makers and spinmeisters," Lautenberg told me in a telephone interview. "Trouble is where they like to be." The Torricelli camp thinks Lautenberg is just jealous; after all, Torricelli has been in the Senate for only two years and already holds what senators call a "leadership position," as head of the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee, the official fund-raising operation for Democratic Senate hopefuls around the country. Plus, Torricelli used to date Bianca Jagger and is currently dating Patricia Duff. The Senators dislike each other so much that New Jersey Democrats have grown used to making elaborate arrangements for mutual ego protection whenever the two of them have to be in the same place at more or less the same time.

At the Library of Congress retreat, senatorial decorum degenerated, both sides agree, when Lautenberg and Ted Kennedy interrupted a presentation by Torricelli in front of two dozen colleagues. Torricelli had been handicapping upcoming Senate races in states where the Democrats have strong prospects, but he apparently failed to mention New Jersey. It's a sore subject. Lautenberg has announced his retirement, leaving the seat wide open, and the state's Republican governor, Christine Todd Whitman, is the heavy early favorite. Evidently, Lautenberg is furious with Torricelli for acting too friendly toward the state's senior Republican officeholder (and too unfriendly toward him). As the junior senator was speaking, Lautenberg waved a copy of a newspaper article that quoted Torricelli as saying he was closer to Whitman than to Lautenberg. "It was a total ambush," one of Torricelli's aides said.

As Lautenberg tells the story, the minute the meeting was over Torricelli pulled the older man aside and said, "You're a piece of shit!" Nor, according to the senior senator from the Garden State, was that all: "Then he threatened to cut my balls off! It was disgusting! For me to be spoken to that way is unbelievable! . . . This is war."



Bob Torricelli and Frank Lautenberg

"I was mad," Torricelli explained in a subsequent telephone interview. "It's something senators don't do to other senators." Was he referring to the graphic language that he used? Well, no. The thing senators shouldn't do to other senators, apparently, is criticize them in front of still other senators. "*His* comments were inappropriate," Torricelli said. "*He* lost control."

—JANE MAYER

LEADING LADIES

The lone female voice in a man's man's play.

WHENEVER Elizabeth Franz, who plays Linda Loman in the current revival of "Death of a Salesman," learns a new role, she writes a novel about the woman she is preparing to play. She imagines details of the landscape the character might have grown up in, her relationship with her parents and her conversations with friends, the kind of magazines she looked at as a young woman, the songs she listened to, the clothes she craved. In the case of "Salesman," which is now at the Eugene O'Neill Theatre, the actress had a head start: she had played Linda Loman opposite Hal Holbrook in a 1994 Cleveland production and in a short national tour in 1996, so she just picked up the hundred-and-seventy-page draft of her "Linda novel" where she had left off. "All kinds of things began to happen as I plumped out my Linda draft for this new production," Franz said the other day in her dressing room. "I understood the strength a woman needs to survive in a very masculine world. I grasped Linda's vast, almost superhuman capacity for love, and I understood that her love for Willy is as overwhelming as it is because it's deeply sexual. When I met with the director, Robert Falls, last summer, he asked me what I saw to be the heart of Willy and Linda's relationship, and I said, 'Their deep sexual bonding, the great sex life they had together.' He said, 'I'd never heard that stated before.' That's the insight that seems to have got me the part."

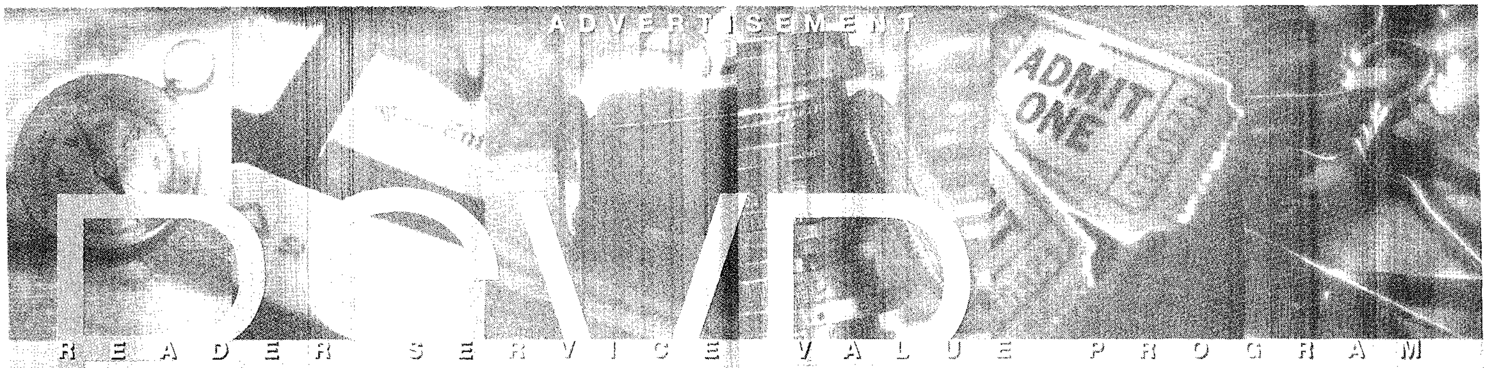
There is another source for Elizabeth Franz's understanding of the Lomans: Willy is extremely similar to her own father. One of four children, she grew up in Ohio in a family that was, she says, "abysmally poor." Her mother was a waitress who had wanted to be a singer. Her father, a first-generation Yugoslav-American, worked at a B. F. Goodrich factory for thirty-six years, making parts for conveyor belts, but he dreamed of being a famous ballplayer. Like Willy Loman, he aspired to the archetypal American dream, what Franz calls "the dream of being famous and liked—not only liked but well-liked." And, like Willy, he lost his job—in his case, when he was fifty-nine years old, just four years before his pension would have begun. He died two years later. "When I speak the line 'Attention must be paid!' it resounds through my entire being," Franz says.

Franz is a slender, soft-spoken fifty-seven-year-old woman with blond, gamine-cut hair and wistful blue eyes. Although she lives in Warren, Connecticut, she is renting an apartment a few blocks from Columbia University during the run of the show, and every day she walks from there to the O'Neill Theatre, on West Forty-ninth Street. She knew that she wanted to be an actress when she was five years old, and at the age of nineteen she got a scholarship to the American Academy of Dramatic Arts, in New York. Her longest-playing roles on Broadway have been in Neil Simon's "Brighton Beach Memoirs" and "Broadway Bound."

Franz says that the way she prepares a role is influenced by the Quaker beliefs she learned from her late husband, the actor Edward Binns. "Quakerism has taught me that we must totally grasp the cause and nature of others' suffering in order to understand their motivations and their rages, and we must suspend all judgment of them," she says.

Franz describes herself as "most definitely a feminist," and she finds it an interesting challenge to overcome her unease at "Salesman" 's formidable masculinity. "It's a play that's very heavily centered on men's bonding. I'm bound to feel a sense of pity and rage toward the kind of woman Linda and the rest of us were forced to be in the nineteen-forties—the passive enabler whose role is to boost all of her husband's craziest dreams, and who is therefore incapable of exposing his delusions and telling him the truth. I'm bound to feel anger at the fact that for millennia women's strength was so suppressed that they couldn't do much to heal their men, not to speak of fulfilling their own potential. But as an actress I must suspend all such judgments and play Linda's unawareness of her oppression."

In the play's last moments, Linda Loman is finally allowed to break down and weep, after she repeats her shattering last words: "We're free. We're free . . . We're free . . ." As for the actress Elizabeth Franz, she notes that at every single performance she keeps right on crying after the play ends, throughout the numerous



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ACROSS

1 SCATTERS (anag.)
7 OVUM (hidden in first letters)
9 A(ARO)N (*oar* anag.)
10 TROUNCES (anag.)
11 T + RUST
13 (b)LENDS
15 I(SO + LATE)D
17 C(RED)O
18 EVIL (rev.)
19 D(ESCEN)DS (*scene* anag.)

DOWN

1 STATE LINE (anag.)
2 COARSE (*course* hom.)
3 TRO(U)T
4 EVACUATED (anag.)
5 RUSE (*rues* hom.)
6 PROGNOSIS (anag.)
8 MAS(TOD)ONS (*dot* rev.)
12 SEEDED (*ceded* hom.)
14 SARGE (hidden)
16 S(I)AVE

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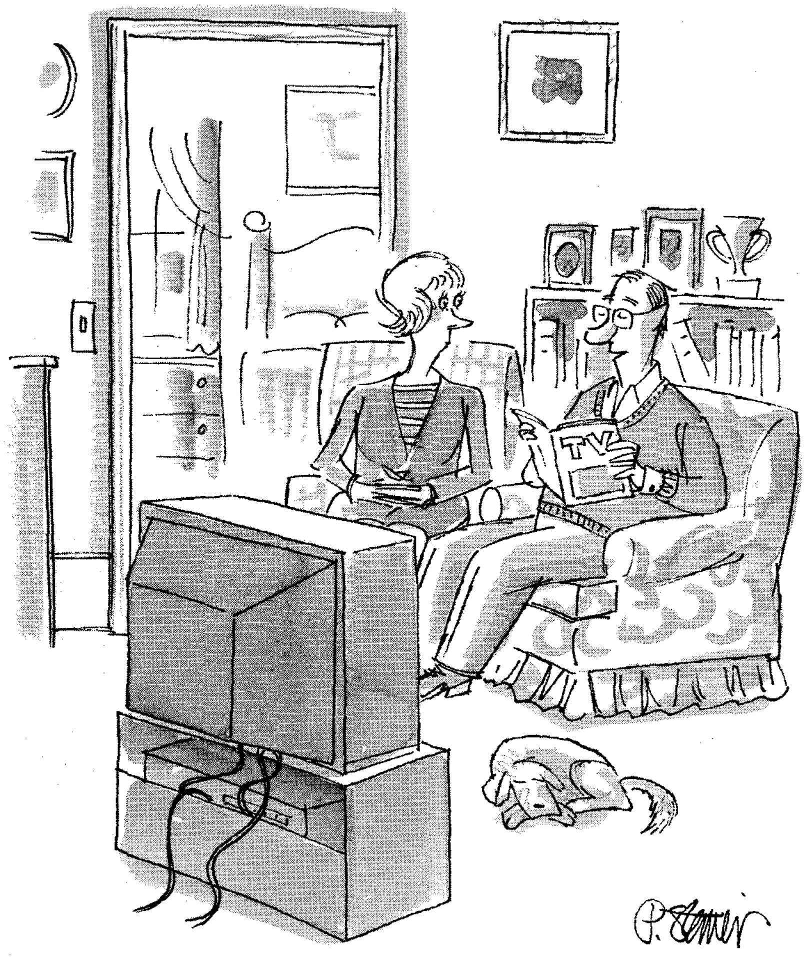


"Oh, good. My complete sexual history is on tonight."

• •

curtain calls. "They're tears of deep sorrow and also of liberation: Willy is at last released from his anger and despair." So, too, was the actress's father, at just about the same age.

—FRANCINE DU PLESSIX GRAY

FAX FROM LOS ANGELES

Hollywood agents on the march: Mike Ovitz isn't the only one.

OH, boy. My agent on the line. (Let's call him Barry.) This hardly ever happened.

"I'm calling you because I want to let you know personally," Barry said. "I don't want you to find out about this in tomorrow's trades. I'm leaving the agency."

Three things: (1) Barry had been my agent for the last eight years; (2) he was one of the top people at the large and successful talent and literary agency that he was about to leave; and (3) for Barry, "personally" has never meant "in person."

"I've been doing this for a long time," Barry said. "It's time to move on."

Move on to where? Santa Fe? Montana? A little trout ranch up in Colorado? The other time Barry had called me in the past year, it was to "personally" cancel lunch, and, while doing so, he indicated that a move out of "this sick town" was, for him, a looming possibility.

"No," Barry said this time. "I'm staying right here. I'm just not going to be an agent anymore. I'm going to be a *manager.*"

What's the difference?

"I can't tell you," Barry said. "Not right now. I've got a million calls to make. We'll have breakfast," he decided. "I'll explain everything."

A few days later, we met at a little health-food place in Brentwood, closer to Nicole's condo, on Bundy, than to O.J.'s house, on Rockingham.

"I can give you a lot more personal attention as your manager," Barry explained, "because I won't have as many clients. I'll really be able to help you."

But what about an agent? Did I need a manager *and* an agent?

Barry stopped eating, always a sign that things were getting serious. "Yes," he announced. "You need both. You need an agent to be on top of what jobs are out there, and you need me to be on top of the agent, to help you get the right ones."

Both. Wow.

Barry took off his glasses, leaned across the table, and lowered his voice. "The thing is," he whispered, "I think the people who've been representing you . . ." Barry's voice trailed off. He looked very sad. "They could have done a better job. They could have cared a little more."

I whispered back, astonished. "*You've* been representing me."

"You're not looking at the big picture," Barry said. "Do you think they've really been taking care of you? Have they been in touch? On a *weekly* basis? Have they come up with any *strategies*? Have they ever bothered to ask you what *you* want?"

"Well," I said. "You asked me what I wanted for *breakfast.*"

"This isn't funny," Barry snapped. "This is your life. Serious stuff. Look, the agency has over five hundred clients. You're probably in the top *forty.*" Barry was outraged. "Forget about *calling* you every week. Those people should've been kissing your *ass.*"

"You mean that's what *you* should've been doing," I suggested.

"No, I'm too old to do that." Barry smiled. "That would be undignified."

"Well," I said, warming to this happy new concept of personal representation, "maybe you should *assign* someone. You're a big guy at the agency. You could do that."

"Not anymore," Barry reminded me. "I've left. I'm a manager now."

"And you want to manage me?"

"Absolutely," he said. "You've been a very loyal client." The check came, and Barry threw down some money. "Those people should treat you with more respect. You've earned it."

"Barry," I said, "*you* are those people. You're talking about *yourself.*"

"You," Barry declared, "should be with someone who really cares. And guess what?"

At this point, I couldn't imagine.

"That someone," Barry said, "is me."

—JOHN MANKIEWICZ

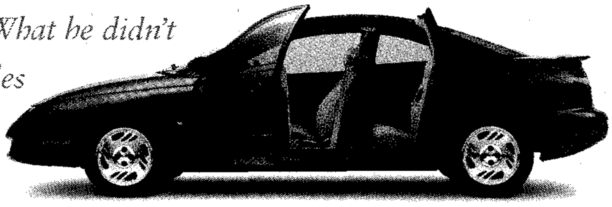
"You've got mail."

How Karl Schab came to buy a new Saturn.

After nearly two years of working in Russia, Karl Schab was ready to come home.

But first he was going to need a car.

So Karl did what any intelligent engineer assigned to the international space station project in Moscow would do—he went into cyberspace and contacted the Saturn Web site. As a former Saturn owner, Karl knew pretty much what he was looking for. What he didn't know was how to make everything happen from 5,536 miles away so that his new car would be waiting for him when he returned home to Colorado Springs.



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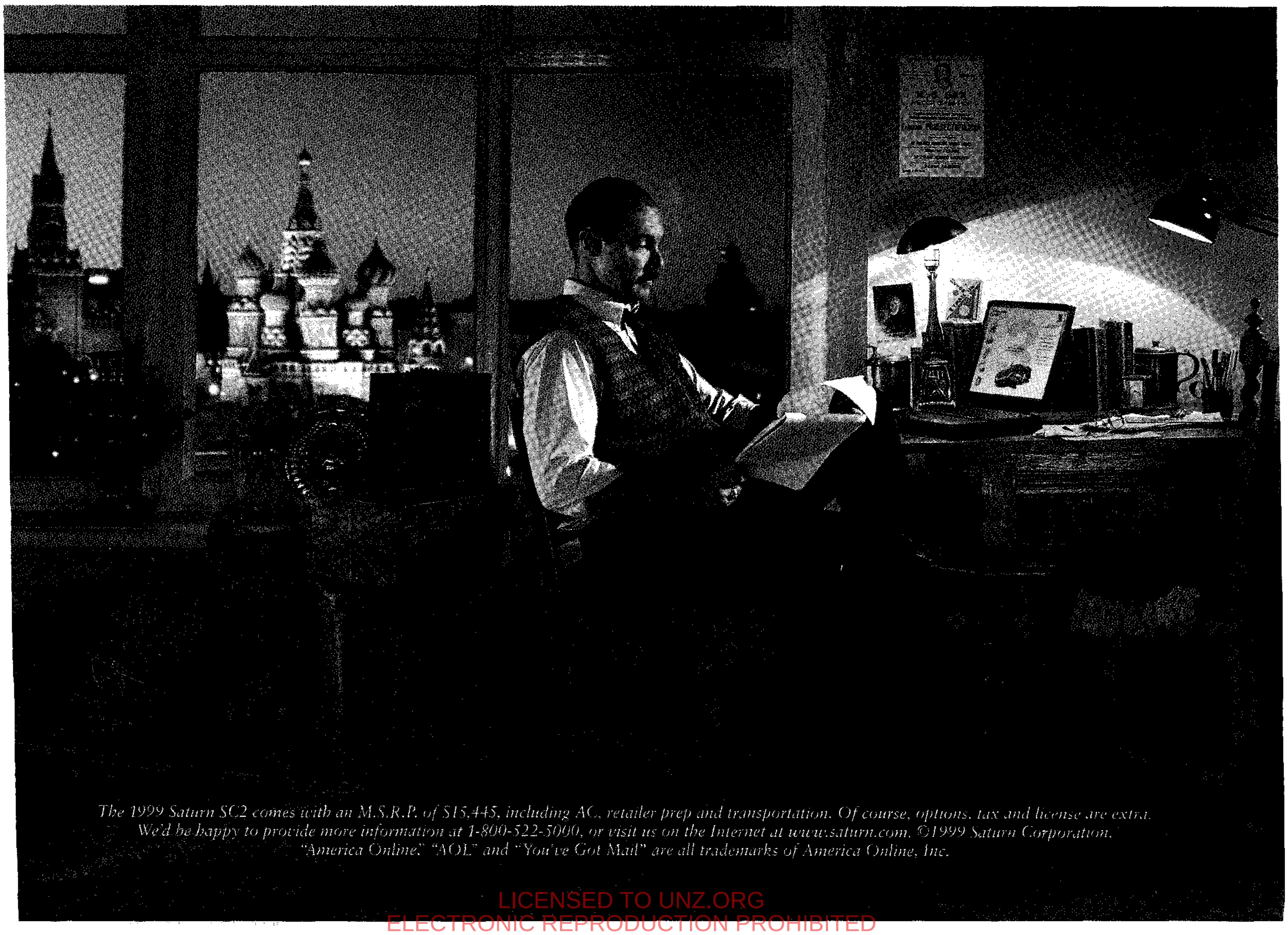

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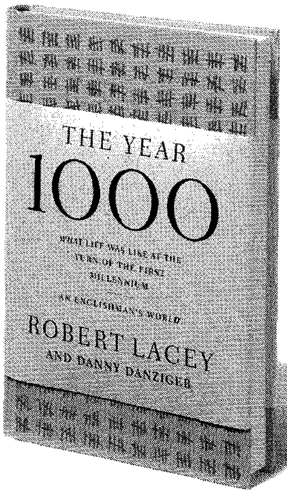
If a married woman commits adultery "her legal husband is to have all her property, and she is to lose her nose and her ears."

WHAT LIFE WAS LIKE IN THE YEAR 1000



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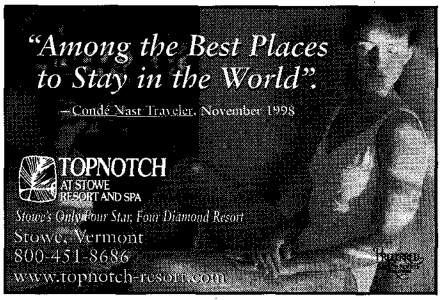
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LIFE AND LETTERS

THE REAL LE CARRÉ

Is the best-selling writer a spy novelist or a master of betrayal?

BY TIMOTHY GARTON ASH

HERE'S a small puzzle for people who think that John le Carré is a spy novelist: His new novel, "Single & Single," contains no spies. Yet it is unmistakably le Carré. How so?

It is, in the first place, the story of a son and his father. The son is Oliver Single, junior partner in a buccaneering London venture-capital firm, the Single & Single of the book's title; the senior partner is his swashbuckling father, Tiger Single. The year is 1991, and Western speculators are looking for ways to exploit the downfall of the Soviet Union. The areas that interest Single & Single are metal, oil, and blood—Russian blood, for profitable export to America. The metaphorical implications of this are obvious, and they color the book, but the planned scams collapse. Instead, the Russian gangsters who are Tiger's partners—the Orlov brothers—get into heroin smuggling, and Tiger continues to launder the profits.

When Oliver discovers what is behind the sudden surge of revenue, he has a fit of conscience, picks up the red customs telephone at Heathrow Airport, and informs on his father. He becomes an agent for a high-level customs investigator, goes underground with a new identity, marries, has a child, divorces. Then a modest trust fund he has set up for his daughter, Carmen, is suddenly credited with five million and thirty pounds from a mysterious foreign source. His ex-wife, Heather, receives a bouquet of thirty roses from an anonymous donor. Thirty pounds, thirty roses—thirty pieces of silver. The father has tracked down the son. I know, the father is saying, that you betrayed me.

Although there are no spies as such, there is family spying: son spying on father, father spying on son. Here, for instance, is le Carré's description of a clandestine visit Oliver makes to his father's office, hoping to crack the safe on behalf of customs agents waiting outside (the father's top legal adviser has been shot in the head, and Tiger has gone missing in the aftermath):

> He heard a thump and died. A burglar. Pigeons. Tiger. A heart attack. He climbed faster, escaping forward, preparing his lines for the obligatory encounter: *It's me, Father. Oliver. I'm terribly sorry I'm four years late, only I met this girl and we got talking and one thing led to another and I overslept.*

In a frantic internal monologue, Oliver runs through other possible openings:

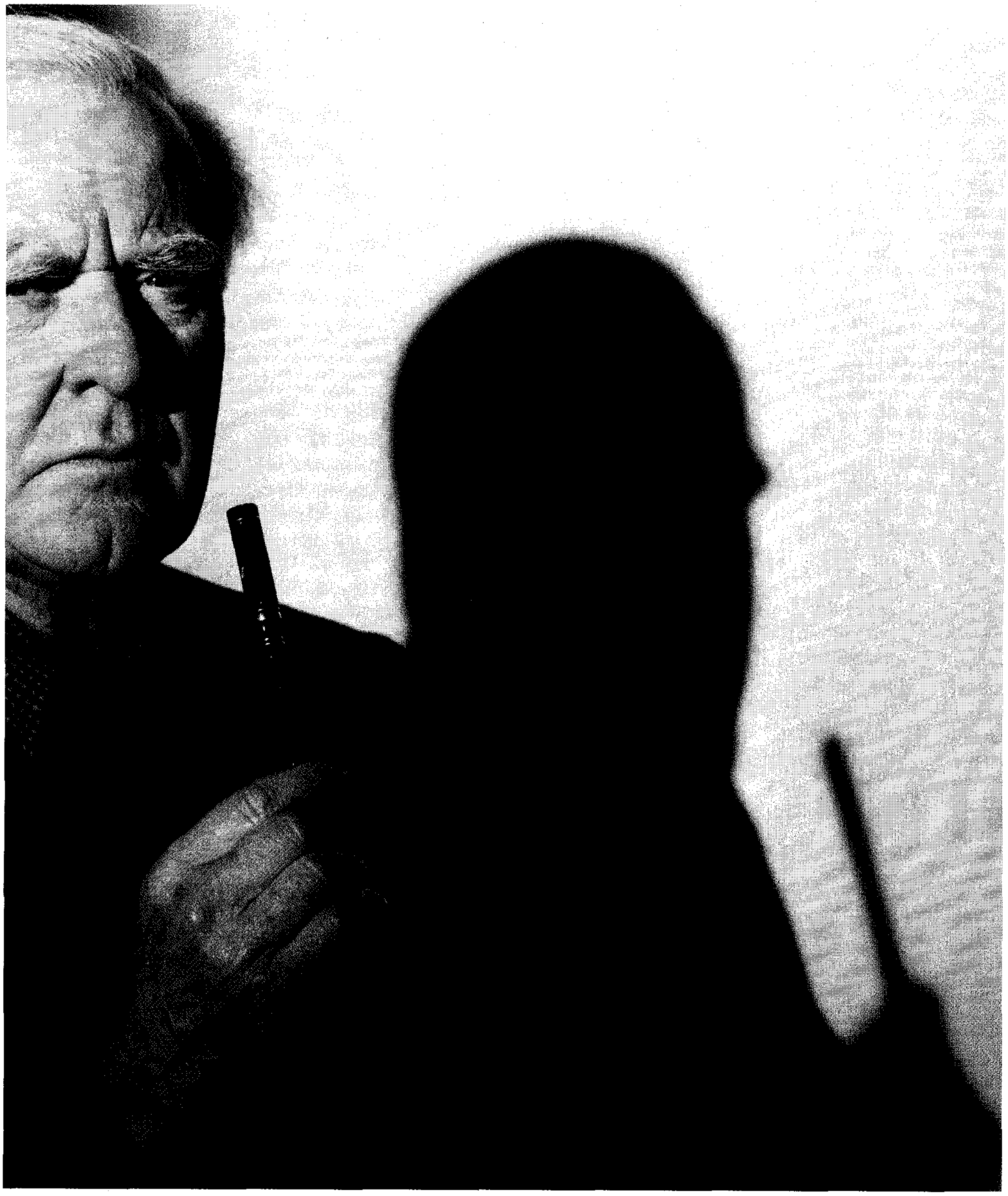
> *Oh Father, look here, thanks tons for Carmen's five-million-odd. She's a bit too young to thank you herself, but Heather and I greatly appreciate the gesture. . . .*
>
> *Well, the other thing is, Father, actually, if it's all right by you I've come to smuggle you to safety. No, no, no, I'm your friend! I mean, it's true I betrayed you, but that was necessary surgery. Deep down I'm still tremendously loyal.*

Another lie? Or perhaps, somewhere deep, deep down, it is really true.

This is powerful, evocative writing. And it goes straight to le Carré's greatest theme: betrayal. Son is betrayed by father, father is betrayed by son, and (as is eventually revealed in a twisting plot) everyone is betrayed by someone.

"SINGLE & SINGLE" calls to mind the other great le Carré father-and-son novel, "A Perfect Spy," which is acknowledged by its author to be his most autobiographical book. There, the father, Rick Pym, is a thinly disguised portrait of le Carré's own father, Ronnie Cornwell. (The author's real name is David Cornwell.) The son is called Magnus, and there's a lot of David Cornwell in him as well, except that Magnus becomes a double agent, spying for two father figures at the same time—one in Czechoslovak intelligence and the other a British war hero named Jack Brotherhood. In fact, "A Perfect Spy" could have been subtitled "Cornwell & Cornwell."

Ronnie Cornwell was a picaresque, forceful, charming, world-class con



"By the time I was sixteen, I was certain that my country was sick at heart," le Carré says. Photograph by Dudley Reed.

man, and he is the obsession of his famous son to this day. Le Carré has been trying to write about him, off and on, for forty years. "He remains a frightening figure to me," he explained during a daylong conversation in the drawing room of his North London home earlier this year. "And he remains a mystery."

Sometimes the Cornwell family had a large house, servants, and strings of racehorses; sometimes they were bankrupt. (In Ronnie Cornwell's 1954 crash, the front page of the *Daily Express* reported that he had amassed more than a million pounds in bad debts—the equivalent of nearly twenty-five million dollars today.) One moment, Ronnie was at Ascot, a girl on each arm; the next, he was in prison. There were fantastic schemes—a skiing club for the British armed forces, a lottery for Singapore—and there were common, workaday tricks to escape creditors. Le Carré says that he and his elder brother, Tony, "were conspirators from quite an early age . . . getting cars round the back so that nobody would know you were in the house, blacking out the windows on the street side."

Ronnie often boasted that he had never read a book, that he was educated "in the University of Life." And he didn't want his children reading while he was around. But le Carré did read, secretly, hungrily: Somerset Maugham, inventor of the modern English spy story; Arthur Conan Doyle; Joseph Conrad; Charles Dickens; John Buchan; Kenneth Grahame ("The Wind in the Willows"); now forgotten storytellers like Dornford Yates; and "lots and lots of P. G. Wodehouse." Instead of books, Ronnie Cornwell had company: big-hearted, colorful people, "all drinkers and womanizers," swapping tales of the underworld and meeting in haunts like the Goat, in Stratford Street, or the Albany Club, in Old Burlington Street—a stone's throw from London's most respectable addresses but themselves far from respectable. Le Carré met one of the characters from these times many years later, on a beach in Corfu. "We was all bent," the old chancer confided, "and your dad was very, very bent." It was the highest possible praise.

Le Carré can remember the lines that the popular Crazy Gang entertainers addressed to his father, and his Cockney accent is still perfect: "Allo, allo, 'oo do we 'ave 'ere, Ronnie, 'ow are you, boy?" Ronnie taught his son the value of "the performance." He would often call him in to tell stories and entertain his demimonde friends. In "Single & Single," there is a comparable moment, when Oliver is asked by his father to perform in front of the Russian gangsters:

> But Oliver is used to this. He is practiced from childhood in such scenes. If Tiger had demanded it of him, he would have done his passable imitation of Margaret Thatcher, or Humphrey Bogart in "Casablanca," or told his funny story about the two Russians peeing in the snow.

Yet le Carré's own father wanted his sons to be different—"lily-white, wonderful English boys." From the age of five, le Carré was sent away to be educated at those very English institutions known as "prep schools" and "public schools"—all-male private boarding schools. His predominant memories are of unhappiness and "being subjected to a great deal of physical pain." The teachers at his public school, Sherborne, were still addressed by their wartime military ranks, and the history of English patriotic heroism was drummed into him. At the same time, in this class-obsessed environment—George Orwell called this kind of schooling "five years in a lukewarm bath of snobbery"—le Carré always had a nagging sense of not coming from quite the right class. In the background, there was that dodgy, black-marketeering father, and there were embarrassing relatives who put pens in their outside pockets and Brylcreem in their hair. He remembers several boys from his prep school being asked to assist at a pheasant shoot on a local aristocrat's estate, but he was not chosen. "I was trade," he explains sarcastically.

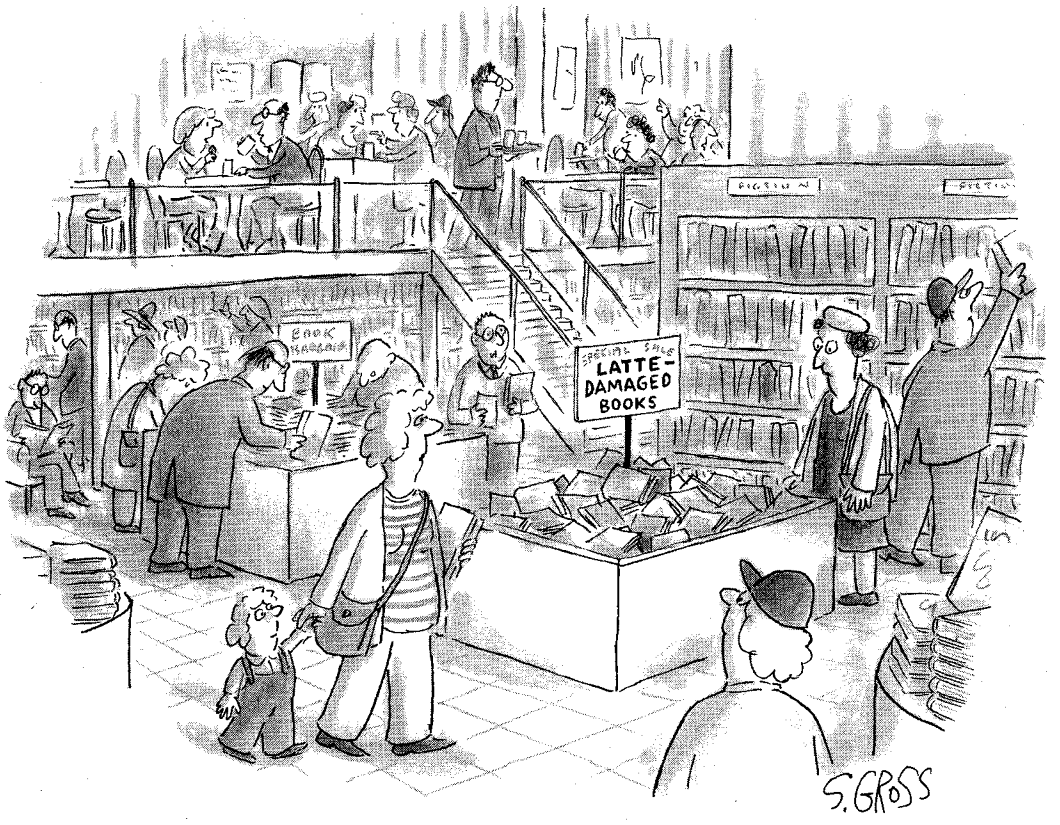
In those years, his reaction to feeling like an outsider was to become a terrific joiner. He was gung ho into every rugger scrum, captain of the junior cricket team, a damned good chap. And his father's lessons in performance were also useful—being entertaining was another way of gaining acceptance. He told me that when the English comedian Frankie Howerd was asked why he wanted to make people laugh, he said, "'Because all my life I've been terrified of ridicule,' which was quite a smart answer."

To this day, in person as in print, le Carré is brilliant at telling stories. When I think of his most characteristic pose, I see his terra-cotta face—still craggily handsome, but somewhat rounder than it looks in author photographs—creasing into a smile under bushy eyebrows as his voice, a soft tenor full of color and varied timbre, breaks into a half-laugh, anticipating an anecdote that he is about to tell. (And he does a more than passable imitation of Margaret Thatcher.)

Trying to work back from the novels to the life, I pointed out that both Oliver Single and Magnus Pym betray their fathers. Did he feel that he had betrayed Ronnie?

"Well," he answered softly, "he was the only person in my childhood whom I had to love, because I had no mother."

He did, of course, have a mother, but not to love. She took off with one of his father's friends, a real-estate agent, when le Carré was five. He was then given to believe that she had died. She hadn't. On reaching the age of twenty-one, he tracked her down, and she suggested they meet at the Ipswich railway station. When he arrived at the ticket barrier, he saw three possible mothers standing on the other side. After he identified the real one, they talked, but to this day he



cannot understand how she could have abandoned him so completely.

I pressed the point. How did he feel he had betrayed his father?

"The betrayal, I suppose, was falling out of love with him. And actually telling him I didn't want to see him again."

In his later life, Ronnie kept calling and trying to sponge off his now rich and famous son. He started signing his name Ron le Carré, and offered to autograph copies of his son's books. When he died, in 1975, at the age of sixty-nine, his son paid for, but did not attend, his memorial service.

Oliver Single, I pointed out, betrayed his father for a morally impeccable cause: to save people from drugs. Did le Carré feel that there was such a justification for his "betrayal" of his own father? He replied that, in a way, his break with Ronnie was a moral decision, too. Just to have lunch with Ronnie was to be "a partner in fraud," he said, because you knew the bill would never be paid.

Hours later, le Carré came back to the question: "I think I am driven by some great sense of personal guilt, and I don't know quite where it began. . . . I suppose if I were stretched out forever on the couch, it would have something to do with feeling as a child that I had driven my mother away—you know, that would be the flip popular psychologist's answer."

LE CARRÉ'S childhood was a curse. But it was also a gift. He often quotes a remark made by his onetime literary model Graham Greene to the effect that childhood is the writer's bank balance, and childhoods, especially lost ones, are scattered like clues throughout le Carré's novels. "Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy" begins with little Bill Roach, a sad, lonely schoolboy, watching a mysterious new master arrive in the rain. Alec Leamas, the spy who came in from the cold, is haunted by a scene he glimpsed in passing but cannot forget—some laughing children waving to him through the back window of a car that was about to be crushed between two heavy trucks—and he sees it again in the instant before he dies, at the foot of the Berlin Wall. Broken childhoods figure in the backgrounds of many characters who become agents or traitors. "No childhood, most of them, that's the trouble,"

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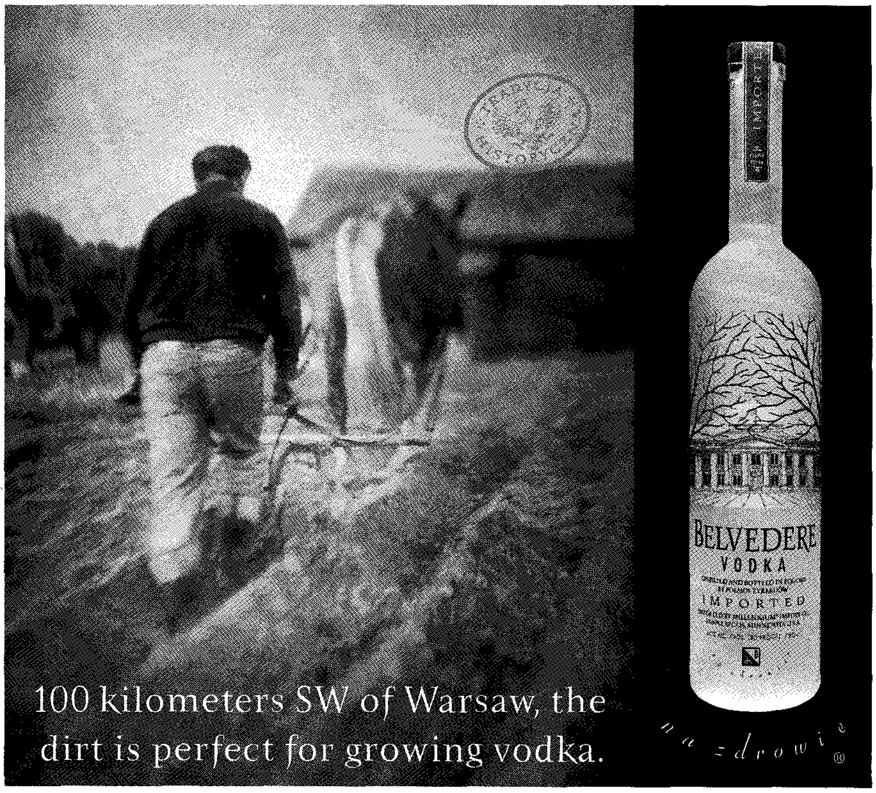
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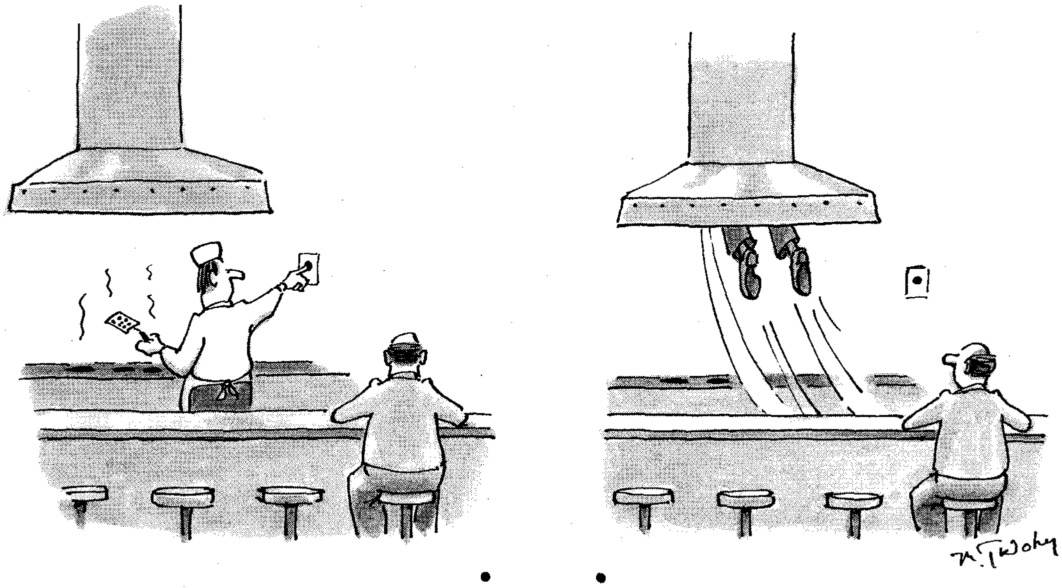

says a counter-intelligence officer in "A Small Town in Germany." Is this the vital clue? Is the perfect spy someone who, at an early age, has irreparably learned disloyalty?

Le Carré won't talk in detail about what he himself did On Her Majesty's Service: names, places, particular operations. His reserve does not derive merely from his having signed the Official Secrets Act. He thinks such things should be kept hidden, for the good of the country. But as he grows older—he is now sixty-seven—he will otherwise speak more freely about his extraordinary life.

In 1948, when he was sixteen, David Cornwell fled from Ronnie, Sherborne, and snob-ridden England to Switzerland. It was a radical, formative step: leaving country and father and seeking a new identity. He enrolled as a very young student at Berne University. He wanted to escape into the deep, dark pools of German language and literature. At moments, he even wished to become German. He also fell into the arms of a real-life Jack Brotherhood, who was based at the British Embassy and worked for the Secret Intelligence Service, popularly known as M.I.6. We don't know the officer's name, but we do know that he appealed to the teen-ager's romantic image of himself as the lonely wanderer between worlds (an ur-motif of German Romanticism). He also appealed to Cornwell's patriotism—a patriotism that might seem slightly contradictory in a person who had just fled his country, but which would later inform all his politics. For the time being, the secret work was modest. Someone from the Embassy would say, "Will you take this to Geneva for us?" And so it started. Spying for Britain reconciled the amorality of home and the morality taught at school. And it was fun.

At the age of eighteen, Cornwell went to do his military service with the British Army's Intelligence Corps in Austria, which in 1950 was still divided into four occupation zones and pullulated with Cold War conspiracies. There were frequent escapees and defectors, and Cornwell, with his now excellent German, found himself interrogating people who had come from behind the Iron Curtain. He collected another mental boxful of stories and of insights into character. After some two years of this, he returned to England to study at Oxford. He did well and took a first-class degree in modern languages: German and French. Yet even at Oxford he was carrying out secret assignments for M.I.5, the domestic security service. These included joining far-left groups in order to collect information about possible Soviet agents. Here was another exercise in betrayal, but betrayal in a good cause. Le Carré argues passionately that such work was justified. It was the height of the Cold War. There certainly had been Communist agents, notoriously at Cambridge University in the thirties, "and who was to say that it wasn't happening at Oxford in the fifties?"

After Oxford, he tried to break with the secret life. He went to teach at England's most famous public school, Eton, while doing some freelance drawing and book illustration. (At this point, he saw himself more as a visual artist than as a literary one.) But he soon got bored and restless, and the secret world drew him back. In 1958, he joined M.I.5 as a full-time officer. There is good reason to believe that his duties included running agents ("joes," as he calls them), conducting interrogations, tapping phones, and performing authorized break-ins. He commuted up to M.I.5's London headquarters from the Buckinghamshire village of Great Missenden, where he and his first wife, Ann, had bought a bungalow.

It was during this time that he became a writer. On the commuter train, wedged between other office workers, he scribbled his first novel, "Call for the Dead," in longhand, filling up lined red notebooks. Charting an investigation of the kind with which Cornwell was by then familiar, "Call for the Dead" is an apprentice work, but already cleverly plotted and sharply written. Its prose, he says, owes much to the discipline of writing intelligence reports: "We went for a bald style . . . profound suspicion of adjectives, and making the verb do the work." The book also introduces le Carré's most famous character, the bespectacled, nondescript, relentless George Smiley, and his errant wife, Ann (named in tribute to his own Ann, he says, although he hastens to add that the real Ann was not errant).

In 1960, he transferred to the foreign-intelligence service, M.I.6, and worked under the usual diplomatic cover—as the British consul in Hamburg and before that as a second secretary at the British Embassy in Bonn. (The West German capital is memorably described in the Dickensian opening to "A Small Town in Germany": "Bonn was a Balkan city, stained and secret, drawn over with tram wire. Bonn was a dark house where someone had died, a house draped in Catholic black and guarded by policemen.") In London and in Bonn, le Carré wrote his next two books: "A Murder of Quality," a detective story set in a school that is a mixture of Sherborne and Eton, and "The Spy Who Came In from the Cold," a novel that poured out of him in three weeks of frenzied writing—a hundred and fifty thousand words, which he then cut, cut, and cut again. (This would become his standard working method: first the outpouring, then ferocious pruning.) The handwritten manuscript was typed by his secretary in the Bonn Embassy. On its publication, in 1963, the book rapidly became an all-time best-seller. When a British newspaper revealed the identity of its author, it was a little difficult to continue quietly with the spying, and, in any case, he now had the money and the opportunity to establish himself as a professional writer; so he left the service in 1964.

THAT le Carré's personal experience of spying was an inspiration for his writing goes without saying. Yet I find that many people don't appreciate—partly, no doubt, because of his own long obfuscation—just how serious was his professional experience in the Cold War business of intelligence and counter-intelligence. (I have before me an academic monograph that loftily declares, "John le Carré may or may not have been a low-level spy for a short time.") Except for the interlude at Eton, he was involved in spying, in one way or another, for sixteen formative years, between the ages of seventeen and thirty-two.

In the sixties and seventies, le Carré went on to create his own version of the secret world, doing "a sort of Tolkien job" on the real one that he knew so well. He invented, he imagined. He darkened, he lightened. He brought every story to a dénouement, whereas most real-life spying activities just trickle on or fade away, unresolved. He conceived of a new institution called "the Circus," a compound of M.I.5 and M.I.6. In "Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy" he engendered a Soviet "mole," Bill Haydon, by asking the "what if" question: What if Kim Philby had not fled to the Soviet Union but had stayed on and reached the top of the British Secret Service? He brought to life the marvellous, sprawling head of research, Connie Sachs, with her fantastic memory and her North Oxford English. "Poor loves," she says in an epiphanous passage on the generation of Haydon and Smiley. "Trained to Empire, trained to rule the waves. All gone. All taken away." He also invented a whole new vocabulary for the trade: "lamplighters" (travelling agents), "baby-sitters" (bodyguards), "scalp-hunters" (strong-arm men), and "honey-traps" (sexual entrapment). Le Carré doesn't think that he invented the term "mole," but "Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy" catapulted it into everyday use. I was told by someone who was until recently in the Secret Service that he had found younger colleagues using le Carré's tags in their work: a nice case of life imitating art.

Then, with the publication of "Smiley's People," in 1979, le Carré brought down the curtain on this world. A decade before the end of the Cold War, he said an artful farewell to his fictional version of it. (He did, however, bring George Smiley back for a final bow, in his 1991 elegy, "The Secret Pilgrim.") Quite deliberately, "Smiley's People" ends exactly where "The Spy Who Came In from the Cold" began—with a spy crossing the Berlin Wall from the East. In the beginning, the British agent Karl Riemeck is shot by East German border guards, and the West is seemingly defeated. In the end, the Soviet spymaster Karla gives himself up: "One little man, hatless, with a satchel. . . . He wore a grimy shirt and a black tie: he looked like a poor man going to the funeral of a friend." George Smiley triumphs—but not triumphantly. " 'George, you won.' 'Did I?' said Smiley. 'Yes. Yes, well, I suppose I did.' "

AROUND the time that le Carré was bringing Karla through the Berlin Wall to the West, I was crossing it in the other direction: first to visit and then to live in East Berlin. I was not a spy, although, as an Oxford undergraduate, I had been "approached." I am more than twenty years younger than le Carré, yet his world feels quite familiar to me—and I know that it does to others of my generation. (Perhaps this is a symptom of how slowly England changes.) We, too, escaped into Kenneth Grahame's imagined, warmhearted England in "The Wind in the Willows," cast ourselves in stories by John Buchan and Somerset Maugham, and grew up with what were still powerful images of wartime heroism. There are also some more individual points of contact: Like le Carré, I went to school at Sherborne, and was even taught by a couple of the same teachers (although they no longer used their military ranks). Like him, I

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fell in love with the language of Thomas Mann, and started a long-running affair with Germany while continuing a love-hate relationship with old mother England. And, inspired partly by the novels of Graham Greene and partly by the belief that there was still a war on (the Cold War against Communism), I nearly joined M.I.6.

Yet I took a different path. I did not become a spy. Instead, I was spied on. The East German State Security Service, the dreaded Stasi, set informers on me to work out what I was up to. Was this Garton Ash a British spy? Was he, as he claimed, a research student? Was he a subversive journalist? (In fact, I was both the second and the third—researching history in the archives but also secretly collecting material on the horrors of the police state.)

When, after the collapse of East Germany, the Germans opened the Stasi files, I found mine, and decided to write a book about it. But there was a difficult question to be tackled: What was the moral difference between those who had spied on me and those who had spied for Britain? Just to say "our spooks good, their spooks bad" was clearly not enough. Who better to discuss this with than John le Carré? So three years ago, I went to stay with him and his wife, Jane, a calm, thoughtful former editor, in the house in Cornwall where they now spend most of their time. As we walked along the beautiful Cornish cliffs, he spoke (in carefully general terms) of his own years as a British spy, with a mixture of nostalgia, irony, and scruples.

A few months later, I sent him the typescript of the book I'd written after exploring my Stasi file. He replied in a sixteen-page handwritten letter, which was partly writer's tradecraft but mainly a passionate, even tortured, intellectual tossing and turning about the morality of spying. My problem, he suggested, was that the offense against me was simply not great enough. I should not, please, present myself as a victim. I had been a privileged outsider, with a British passport in my pocket, who could escape at any time; it was the poor East Germans who had informed on me—crabbed, intimidated, blackmailed—who were the real victims. A characteristically complicated statement from a man who is an expert on all varieties of loyalty and betrayal. Then he reflected on his own experience. "I never betrayed my brother," he wrote, referring to my account of a Stasi informer who had done so, "but I betrayed, in your terms." Yet, he argued, betraying the trust of people you had befriended in order to gain information for the British state was justified, as it helped to defend a free society. "For me—but I'm one of your bad guys in the end—you're *too* fine, *too* unaccepting of the realities of having to *do & act* and protect what's worth protecting." It was a marvellous but also a troubling letter, and it led to a further round of correspondence and conversation about what he called "a question that's haunted me these last forty-five years."

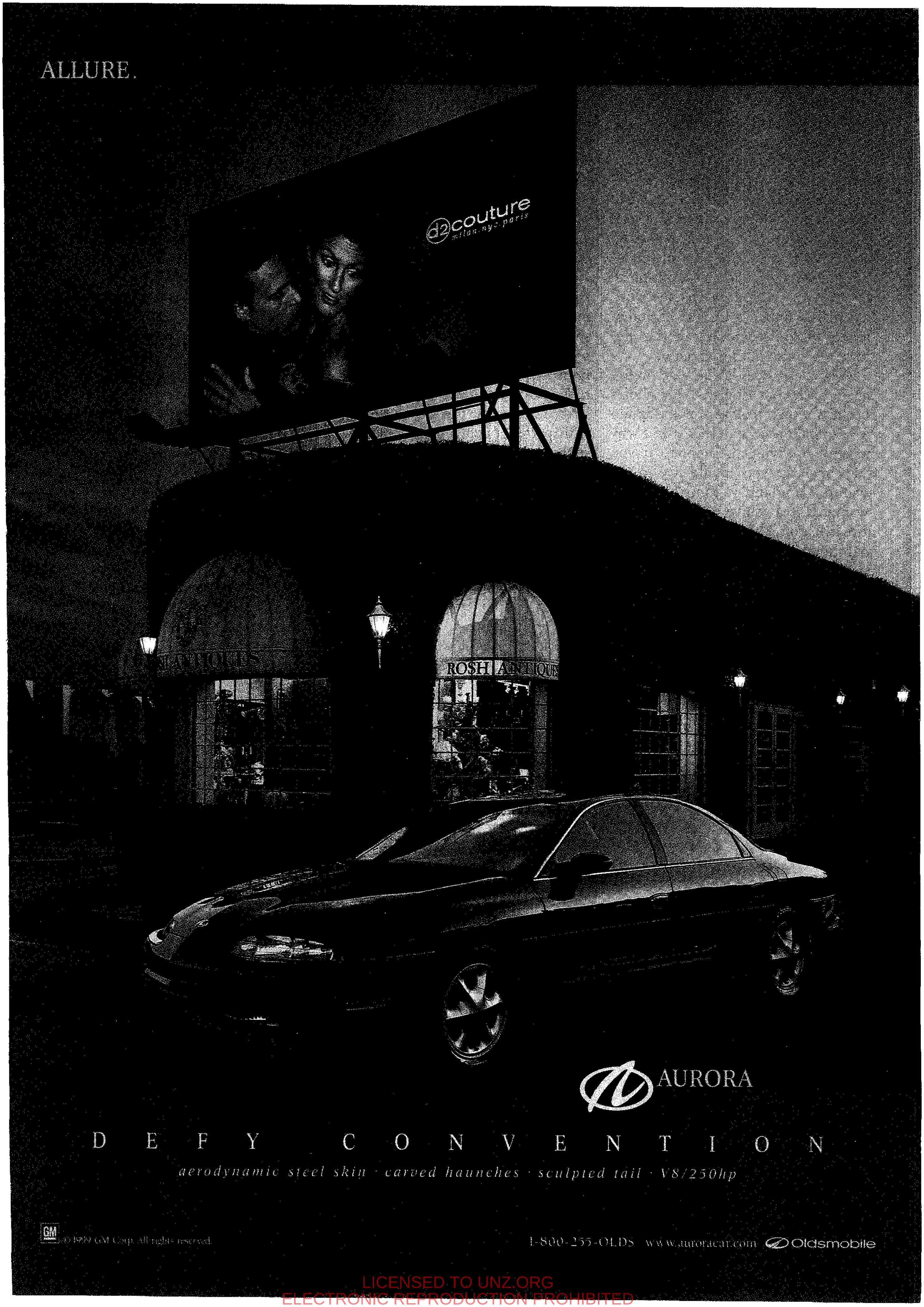
"Protect what's worth protecting," he admonished. But what is really worth protecting? At the heart of most of le Carré's novels is a conflict of loyalties: to betray your country or to betray your friend, your conscience or your father. Sometimes there are statements of defiance, even of triumphalism. "It was there, it was evil, you spied the hell out of it and now it's gone away," a character in "Our Game" says. More often, there is the voice of doubt. "I would say that since the war, our methods—ours and those of the opposition—have become much the same," the British spy chief called Control says near the beginning of "The Spy Who Came In from the Cold," a book that portrays some very dirty methods. Did the ends justify those means? Well, perhaps. But the danger of a small group of men arrogating this moral judgment to themselves is spelled out in "A Perfect Spy." Magnus Pym reflects on the security-service officers he works for at Oxford: "Not dishonest men. Not stupid. But men who see the threat to their class as synonymous with the threat to England and never wandered far enough to know the difference." Does defending your own class justify betrayal? George Smiley, taking his last bow, spells out what is almost a leftist critique of the growth of Western security services during the Cold War: "We've given up far too many freedoms in order to be free."

I am quoting le Carré the author. What does David Cornwell, the man, think of these questions? Continuing our debate, I put some of them to him as we sat in his Hampstead drawing room. In one respect, he was unyielding: provoked by my "too fine" liberal doubts, he repeated, firmly, his arguments for the necessity of spying. And yet he was, at the same time, fiercely critical of the Britain on whose political character the moral justification of this spying depends. Our country, he said, was class-ridden, arrogant, antiquated, in need of radical reform. When the Conservative government of Margaret Thatcher offered him a medal—a C.B.E., or Commander of the Order of the British Empire—he turned it down.

In Britain and America, spying is associated with the right, and many people assume that le Carré is likewise of the right. This assumption seems to have been reinforced by the highly publicized row he had in 1997 with Salman Rushdie, a writer clearly identified with the left. (Le Carré's slightly complicated position is that the principle of free speech had been upheld by publication of the hardback of "The Satanic Verses"; if going ahead with the paperback was likely to result in the deaths of innocent people, Rushdie should have waited.) But the David Cornwell I know can hardly be described as conservative, and certainly not as a Conservative. He wants a changed Britain. He would like to get rid of titles and to see a directly elected upper house of Parliament. He believes that the Church of England should be disestablished, and that Britain should join Europe much more fully. Above all, he says, private education, the curse from which so many others flow, should be abolished and replaced with an integrated school system based on merit. Referring to an old joke about Eton, which lies close to the very unglamorous town of Slough, he says that England's scholastic seat of privilege (currently educating both of Prince Charles's sons) should become literally "Slough Grammar School."

So is he on the left?

"I think because I want radical change in British society, because I have a great and almost an angry contempt for the existing British establishment—um, I must be a lefty by definition," he told me. He was "thrilled" when the New Labour government of Tony Blair was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elected, in May of 1997, although he has been disappointed since then.

His political views go back a long way. "I think that by the time I was sixteen I was certain that my country was sick at heart," he told me. "The structures and the cant and the social presumptions and the racism that I had been taught at Sherborne were a load of junk." And yet, of course, he was also fascinated by them; they are his material. He went to teach at Eton, of all places, then shafted its ghastly snobbery in "A Murder of Quality." Another bundle of contradictions, another betrayal—but also in a good cause.

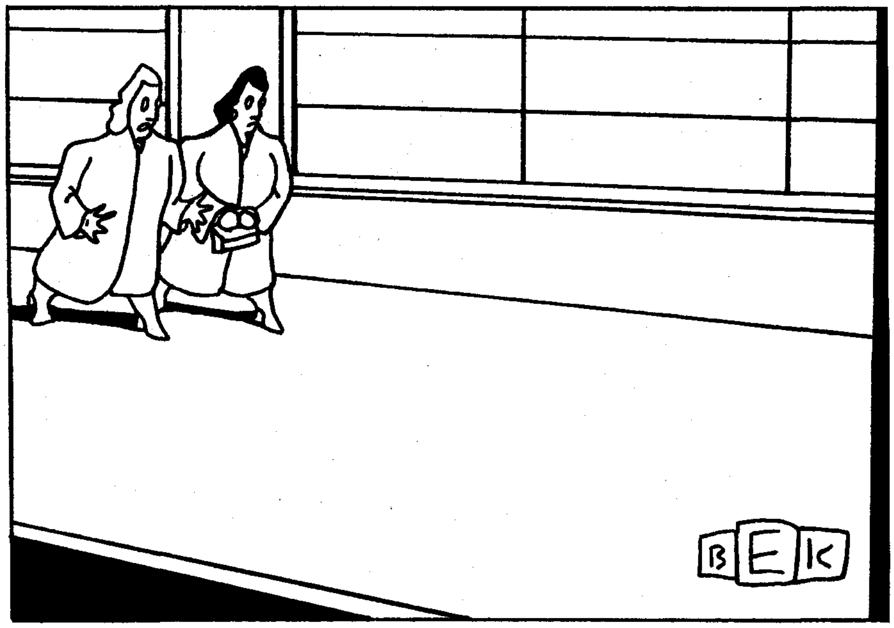
Why, I ask, does le Carré go on living in tricky old England? He quotes the answer that the Nazi-hunter Simon Wiesenthal once gave when asked why he went on living in Vienna: "If you study malaria, you should live in the swamp." England is John le Carré's swamp. It is a source of constant creative irritation. He wouldn't mind losing that stimulus if it meant that the swamp could be drained, yet he fears that "the swamp won't dry in my lifetime. But I don't know. I have the impatience of the old. I'm an old spy in a hurry. I'd just like to see some of these things happen before I die."

TO most people, a le Carré novel is the world of Smiley and the Circus. Yet he has been writing books with other, often exotic settings for twenty years. Post-Smiley, post-Circus, le Carré went to the Middle East ("The Little Drummer Girl"), to the Soviet Union during the perestroika years ("The Russia House"), to the Caribbean and to Panama ("The Night Manager" and "The Tailor of Panama"), and now, for "Single & Single," to Turkey and Georgia. In each case, there are still elements of a secret world—a spy, a covert cartel, an undercover customs investigation—but the books are not set within it.

So what makes them still unmistakably le Carré? Stylistically: suspense maintained by old-fashioned narrative skills (he holds back information like a parent concealing a candy bar); exceptionally spare prose, subtly changing in style with each character who takes the lead; and dialogue used to advance plot, with perfect pitch for every variety of spoken English. In "Single & Single" he revels in new Russian English, with its gaudy mixture of the portentous and the obscene, and the missing definite and indefinite articles:

> "Mikhail Ivanovich says it's important to know which side bear sleeps," Hoban translated with patent derision, lifting his mouth from the cellphone but without switching it off. "If bear sleeps on left side, you eat the right side. Left side of bear will be too hard to eat. If bear jerks off with left paw, you eat right paw. You want to eat some bear?"

Thematically, le Carré's true subject is not spying. It is the endlessly deceptive maze of human relations: the betrayal that is a kind of love, the lie that is a sort of truth, good men serving bad causes and bad men serving good. His fear that nothing human is ever quite what it seems comes shivering through a characteristic passage from "Smiley's People": "By the age of forty, someone clever had written ominously, a man gets the face he deserves." (The someone clever was Orwell, and he actually gave us until fifty.) "Smiley doubted it. He had known poetic souls condemned to life imprisonment behind harsh faces, and delinquents with the appearance of angels."



"He'd rather be home by himself, staring into space. I can't compete with that."

Yet this is not a world of unrelieved moral blackness. Deep down, le Carré still believes in the possibility of goodness. Even inside his worst delinquents, there are angels trying to get out.

DURING a visit to le Carré's Cornwall home last year, I asked what he planned to do next. He talked enthusiastically about writing a first volume of autobiography: treating that amazing childhood and exorcising Ronnie. On the left-hand page he might record his memories, on the right the now discovered facts. When we went upstairs to his London study earlier this year, there was a Ronnie file on the table: a copy of his father's war record (it seemed to consist mainly of leave "on compassionate grounds"), press cuttings about the time Ronnie stood for Parliament, and some draft pages of the autobiography, typed on cream-colored notepaper.

But on a large notice board, covering most of one wall, was pinned a sheet of paper with the first-draft opening paragraph of a new novel, written in le Carré's flowing hand. Nearby were other scraps of paper with handwritten dialogue or description, and a couple of press cuttings. Already, he has a central figure in mind—another character spun off from his own possible selves. Already, there is the outline of a cinematic ending. Soon he will be off again, with plain postcards on which to make his notes, inspecting distant places. He will see them not through his own eyes, as a journalist does, but through those of his main character, his "secret sharer." Thus, when he visited Georgia he *was* Oliver Single. "And, however drunk I am, when I go to bed I sit up in bed and I write the postcards into narrative."

I assume that the new novel will win out against the autobiography, as fiction has done through the forty years of le Carré's writing life. Even now, the subject of Ronnie is too difficult, too painful—and, who knows, perhaps if he had been able to write the autobiography he would never have written the novels.

WHAT entry will John le Carré have in histories of English literature? He has always suffered from the "spy novelist" label. In British bookshops, his books are found on the crime-and-thriller shelves, along with Grisham, Ludlum, Forsyth, and company. Le Carré himself strives to be philosophical about this: "I say to myself I can't have it both ways." He reaches an enormous audience; it would be too much to expect the praise of literary critics, as well. Unlike Graham Greene, le Carré does not distinguish between "entertainments" and serious fiction. He laughingly recalls that a famously highbrow female critic—the kind of person known in British English as a "bluestocking"—chided him for not having read a long review of one of his novels in the *London Review of Books*, the house journal of the Hampstead literati. "But, David," she said, "you must read it. You've been *upgraded*."

Yet the grading thing does irritate him. He talks quite angrily about British "mediacrats" and the poisonous reviewing trade (although "Single & Single," published in the United States this month, has received very good reviews). His novels have not won any of the main British literary prizes, but then he doesn't allow them to be submitted for consideration. Most contemporary writers probably have a circle of a couple of hundred people—many of them fellow-writers or critics—about whose opinion of their work they really care. Le Carré's readership map is quite different. There is a very small circle of family and close friends, perhaps a dozen people, and then there are the millions of ordinary readers. He tries to ignore the arbiters in between.

I suggest to him that his claims for lasting literary recognition may depend on the answer to this question: How much of what matters in human experience can be found in the secret world?

He thinks that most of it can—or, at least, that "it can be made to be there." The secret world, he says, "is also the national subconscious." It takes you to the "secret center" of a country. If you want to know the deepest longings and anxieties of any nation, then look at what its security and intelligence services are being asked to do. This suggests a rather unfashionable but far from ignoble vision of the writer as an aide to the national conscience—a notion familiar in Victorian and Edwardian Britain but not often encountered in contemporary Anglo-American fiction. Yet le Carré still feels slightly ill at ease in England, while across the world he is lauded to the echo, a byword in thirty tongues. Here's another tension to keep his penfires burning.

If we had to play a crude literary game and draw a scale running from, say, Robert Ludlum to Thomas Mann, I know toward which end I would put le Carré. His finest novels are more compelling, moving, amusing, and profound than most of what passes for serious literature. (Philip Roth has called "A Perfect Spy" "the best English novel since the war.") He has done what all novelists must aspire to do: create a world. Places, characters, and terms that he invented have passed into the language. There is a corner of imagined earth that is forever le Carré.

He tells a story about going to hear Thomas Mann lecture in Berne in 1949. Mann was heckled by Swiss students; some even shouted "Traitor!" because Mann had spent the war years in the United States and had sided with America against his native land. Filled with a mixture of indignation, chutzpah, and simple curiosity, the seventeen-year-old David Cornwell went to Mann's dressing room afterward.

A tall man opened the door and said, "What do you want?"

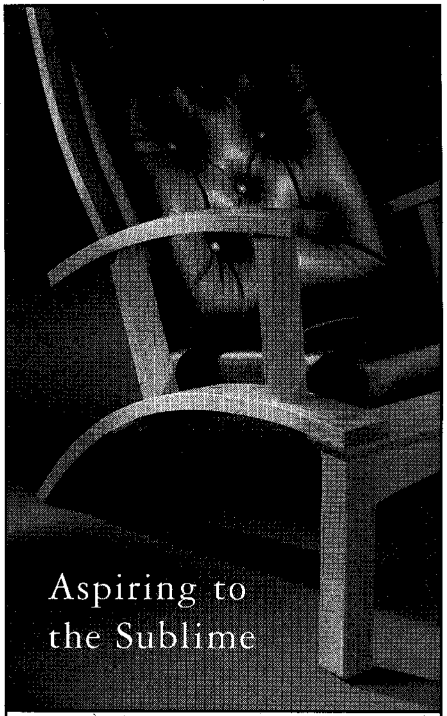
"I just wanted to shake your hand."

"Here it is," Mann said, shook hands, and withdrew.

I think that if they met again, on another shore, Mann would offer his hand and say, as old-fashioned Germans do when they greet someone they recognize as a colleague, "Herr Kollege." ◆

"I don't want the cemetery defiled by turning it into a pet cemetery even if it is a separate section," said Howard Eiseman, president of the Hebrew Benevolent Society. "Today it could be cats and dogs and the next thing you know it would be a potbellied pig."—*Chicago Tribune.*

And that just wouldn't be kosher.



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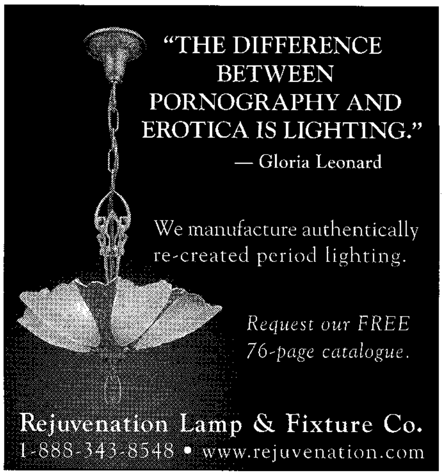

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LETTER FROM NANTAHALA

RUN, RUDOLPH, RUN

How the fugitive became a folk hero.

BY TONY HORWITZ

On the morning of January 30th last year, one day after he allegedly bombed an abortion clinic in Alabama, Eric Rudolph visited Plaza Video in the town of Murphy, in the mountains of North Carolina. He rented "Kull the Conqueror," which is billed on its sleeve as an action fantasy about "a fearless barbarian warrior" who wields his "avenging sword" against "the forces of darkness." That evening, Rudolph, who had been living in a trailer two miles from the town, drove to the Bi-Lo supermarket and bought seventy-three pounds of peanuts, raisins, oatmeal, batteries, and other supplies. He stopped next door, at Burger King, and complained that his French fries weren't hot enough. Then he vanished.

A week later, raccoon hunters found Rudolph's pickup truck on a wooded hillside about five miles away, with the Burger King bag still in the cab and with a rosary and a cross looped around the rearview mirror. The truck had been seen speeding away from the abortion clinic in Birmingham, and Rudolph was wanted for questioning. Hundreds of state and federal agents began searching the hills and woods around Murphy with bloodhounds, helicopters, and thermal-imaging equipment. Thirteen months later, despite one of the most intensive manhunts in American history, they are still looking for him.

As the search continued, the authorities gathered increasingly incriminating evidence against Rudolph. He was eventually charged not only with the Birmingham blast, which killed a guard and seriously injured a nurse, but also with three other attacks: the pipe bomb at the Atlanta Olympics, which killed one person and wounded more than a hundred others, and two other explosions in Atlanta—at an abortion clinic and at a gay night club.

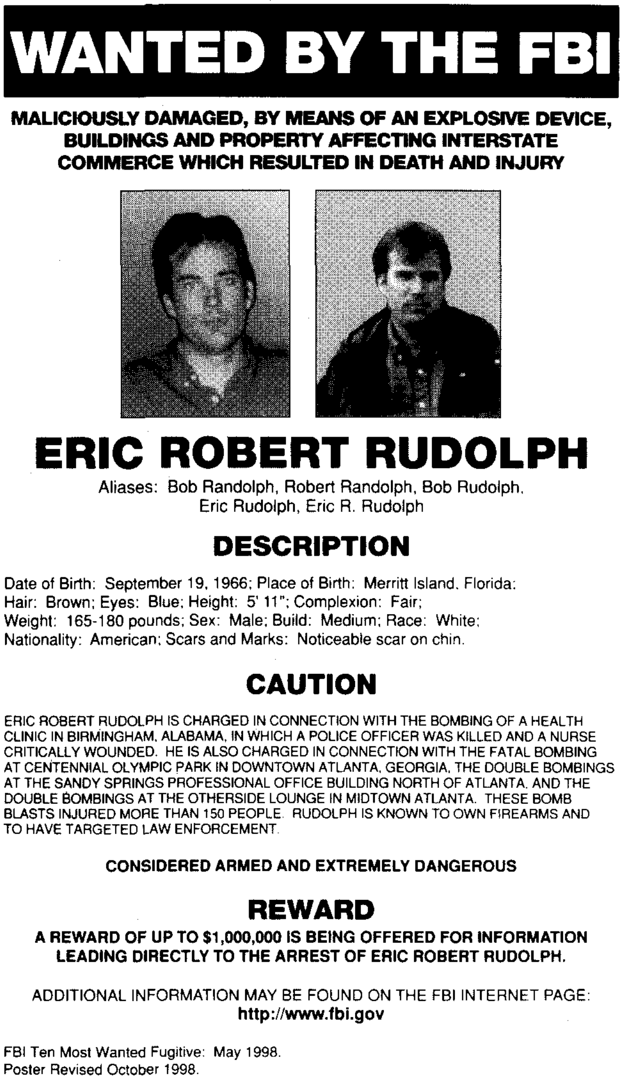
The bombs, filled with flooring nails and shrapnel, were designed to kill and maim, and Rudolph is now assumed to be well armed. Nevertheless, many of the people who live in the mountainous search area regard the fugitive as far less menacing than the federal and state agents sent to hunt him down. To some, he has even become a folk hero.

The Nantahala Mountains rise in the far-southwest corner of North Carolina, forming a ladder rung between the Great Smokies and the Blue Ridge. Nantahala is a Cherokee name meaning Land of the Noonday Sun, and the mountains are indeed so steep, and the valleys so narrow, that the sun doesn't penetrate the valleys until midday. The Nantahala are also extremely rocky, and are covered with what rangers call a "triple canopy" forest: chest-high underbrush, laurel and rhododendron thickets ten feet high or more, and towering hardwood trees.

"In all of eastern America, Rudolph couldn't have picked a better spot to hide," said Mike Stephens, a lieutenant with the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission. Stephens, who has spent months aiding the manhunt, drove me through the core search area, which covers roughly thirty square miles, most of it national forest. The terrain is often almost impenetrable. "It can be hands and knees for the whole side of a mountain," Stephens said. The area is sparsely populated; it abounds with fresh springs and streams; and there are many caves and abandoned mines in which to hide.

The only element missing for survival is ready sustenance; though trout are plentiful, game generally is not. Rudolph is known to have emerged only once, last July, when he stole a large cache of food and vitamins. Investigators believe that that supply is nearly exhausted. When I visited a Justice Department official in Atlanta, he was on the phone with the F.B.I., discussing what weight to assign the thirty-two-year-old Rudolph in its latest bulletins. They settled on a hundred and sixty-five pounds, a fifteen-pound drop from last year.

Though federal agents will not share many details about the manhunt, they acknowledge that a critical "window of opportunity" is about to close. Their helicopters, equipped with infrared scopes to detect body heat, work best when temperatures are low. Bare trees also aid both aircraft and ground searchers. When foliage and warmth return, in late March, luring anglers to local trout streams and crowds of hikers to the nearby Appalachian Trail, the fugitive may find it much easier to steal food, or to slip out of the area altogether.



WANTED BY THE FBI

MALICIOUSLY DAMAGED, BY MEANS OF AN EXPLOSIVE DEVICE, BUILDINGS AND PROPERTY AFFECTING INTERSTATE COMMERCE WHICH RESULTED IN DEATH AND INJURY

ERIC ROBERT RUDOLPH

Aliases: Bob Randolph, Robert Randolph, Bob Rudolph, Eric Rudolph, Eric R. Rudolph

DESCRIPTION

Date of Birth: September 19, 1966; Place of Birth: Merritt Island, Florida;
Hair: Brown; Eyes: Blue; Height: 5' 11"; Complexion: Fair;
Weight: 165-180 pounds; Sex: Male; Build: Medium; Race: White;
Nationality: American; Scars and Marks: Noticeable scar on chin.

CAUTION

ERIC ROBERT RUDOLPH IS CHARGED IN CONNECTION WITH THE BOMBING OF A HEALTH CLINIC IN BIRMINGHAM, ALABAMA, IN WHICH A POLICE OFFICER WAS KILLED AND A NURSE CRITICALLY WOUNDED. HE IS ALSO CHARGED IN CONNECTION WITH THE FATAL BOMBING AT CENTENNIAL OLYMPIC PARK IN DOWNTOWN ATLANTA, GEORGIA, THE DOUBLE BOMBINGS AT THE SANDY SPRINGS PROFESSIONAL OFFICE BUILDING NORTH OF ATLANTA, AND THE DOUBLE BOMBINGS AT THE OTHERSIDE LOUNGE IN MIDTOWN ATLANTA. THESE BOMB BLASTS INJURED MORE THAN 150 PEOPLE. RUDOLPH IS KNOWN TO OWN FIREARMS AND TO HAVE TARGETED LAW ENFORCEMENT.

CONSIDERED ARMED AND EXTREMELY DANGEROUS

REWARD

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FBI Ten Most Wanted Fugitive: May 1998.
Poster Revised October 1998.

After almost two winters in the wild, Rudolph is now assumed to look like a skinny, long-haired mountain man.

RIC FELD/AP/WIDE WORLD

THE headquarters of the manhunt is ten miles west of the main search area—in Andrews, a dejected-looking town of eighteen hundred. Originally a railroad and tannery center, Andrews now has furniture and bluejeans factories, and a seasonal tourist trade, mostly catering to fishermen and campers. Winter used to be a slow time, but at a roadside hotel where I stayed in February the breakfast room filled at dawn with clean-cut, muscular men in camouflage pants, combat boots, and black T-shirts that denoted their branch of law enforcement. One man eating an English muffin had "Observer/Sniper" emblazoned on his chest, above rifle crosshairs. The jacket of another declared "FBI SWAT." After breakfast, the men loaded four-wheel-drive vehicles with rifle bags and drove to a defunct textile plant that is occupied by the Southeast Bomb Task Force. A low, windowless building, it now bristles with antennae and dishes and is ringed by a high fence. Helicopters clatter in and out at all hours, and mobile-home-like vehicles are wreathed in electronic gear. The entrance to the compound is secured by deputized prison guards from Georgia, who are clad in black uniforms and black helmets. When I approached on foot, a guard reached for his weapon and barked at me from fifty yards away. Such caution is understandable: in November, someone fired several rounds from a high-powered rifle into the compound, ruffling the hair of one man and narrowly missing another man. No one has been caught.

This part of North Carolina, like much of southern Appalachia, has always been jealous of its privacy. The Scotch-Irish who settled here in the early nineteenth century brought with them a talent for making whiskey and a distrust of outside authority. Until the middle of this century, government rarely touched this remote society except when state agents called "revenuers" came to bust up stills. "When I growed up, you didn't have a driver's license," Ray Cochran, a ninety-two-year-old former logger and bootlegger, said. "Income tax? Not back then. There wasn't a damned government as far as was we knowed, except the revenuers."

Charles Frazier, the author of "Cold Mountain," grew up in Andrews. When he was a boy, in the early nineteen-sixties, the military used the Nantahala for war games that pitted what the Army termed "friendly government forces" against "guerrillas in the hills." Frazier said that some locals reflexively rooted for the guerrillas. Like many natives, Frazier said, he grew up with "a feeling that western North Carolina is a bit different from the rest of the state and the nation, not part of the mainstream culture, and we felt proud of that difference."

In recent years, this ingrained separatism has been amplifed by an influx of right-wing extremists, who regard the F.B.I. and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms as storm troopers for a totalitarian New World Order. Many of these extremists, who espouse a range of white-supremacist and survivalist views, believe that someday soon an invading army will arrive in black helicopters to seize the guns and trample the liberties of true Americans. Now, as if in fulfillment of their most conspiratorial fantasies, the F.B.I., the A.T.F., and other agencies have indeed descended in force, creating a heavily armed encampment, with many dark-green choppers that in dim light appear black. "People are not so much for Rudolph as against all this," Lane Moore, a general surgeon who works at the hospital next to the task-force base, said. On a recent morning, he stood in the hospital parking lot with co-workers, watching the choppers land. "This could be Afghanistan with a Soviet fort in the center of a village," Moore said. "It's not a good P.R. move."

Other residents are vexed by the road traffic that pours out of the base most mornings between seven and eight. Convoys speed east out of town, past a deer-crossing sign that has a red nose painted on it in a mocking reference to Rudolph. The cars snake along a deep valley floor, past trailers and modest homes clinging to the narrow road, then fan out onto fire trails and gravel routes that wind up into the mountains and hollows in and around the unincorporated township of Nantahala.

The ground search is methodical, exhausting, and treacherous. The searchers have had to contend with swarms of bees and with rattlesnakes "so big they'll puke up a buck deer," said the Andrews police chief, Clay Hardin. Several sites that Rudolph is accused of attacking were rigged with secondary bombs, intended to detonate when law enforcement arrived. "All the F.B.I. profilers think he will fight back if caught," Stephens, the wildlife agent, said. "He might go out in a blaze of glory and have his camp booby-trapped."

Each search team typically includes about six people, led by a "man tracker" skilled at detecting signs of human passage: crushed leaves, broken boughs, old campfires, footprints left by man-length strides. The trackers are accompanied by marksmen with heavy weapons and wearing body armor. Dog teams are also ready to sniff footprints or possible bombs. Motion sensors that set off phones back at headquarters have been placed at key points. At night, agents sometimes perch in ridge-top listening posts. On one wooded trail, I encountered two men in bluejeans and flannel shirts, toting knapsacks, who could have passed for day hikers, except that they had bulletproof vests poking out of their jackets.

The task force has defined the search area by combining the most recent evidence of Rudolph's movements with information about his previous life. Though Rudolph spent his boyhood in southern Florida, he moved, with his mother and siblings, to Nantahala as a young teen-ager, in 1981, soon after his father's death. The family settled on a six-acre plot near the end of a gravel road beside Partridge Creek and adopted a back-to-the-land life style, raising animals and growing their own herbs and vegetables. Rudolph quickly became an avid outdoorsman. He also played war games—elaborate contests in which local youths tracked one another through the woods.

Several of those who played the games with Rudolph have told the task force that he sometimes hid in caves and dug bunkers. He was also known for disappearing into the wilderness for days with only a poncho, which suggests that he had prepared a hideout in advance. One photograph of Rudolph as a young man seems to show him rappelling into a mine. So last fall the task force hired Darren Free, a North Carolina man who is an expert at finding underground sites. Consulting old maps, Free quickly turned up several hundred potential bolt-holes—mostly abandoned shafts where men had once mined mica, talc, and gemstones. Free then spent six weeks teaching search teams to ferret out caves and mines.

"If you don't know what to look for, you can walk right by," Free told me. To prove his point, he drove me into the mountains and scrambled down a woody slope, then asked, "Can you find me a cave?" I couldn't, but only ten feet away lay a narrow crevasse concealed by a tangle of rhododendron. Free led me down into the cavity and we quickly entered a level chamber that we could comfortably stand up in. It was warm enough for us to shed our winter coats. Free explained that the temperature is constant in most caves—between fifty-five and sixty degrees. "Warm in the winter, cool in the summer," he said. With his flashlight he showed me a clear stream flowing along one side of the cave and down into the earth. "There's his water supply, and he's got a latrine, too," Free said.

Cherokees had lived in these caves for centuries, Free told me, and he knows one man who still does. He sees no reason that Rudolph couldn't do the same, particularly if he had stocked the site with food, Sterno fuel, and batteries. "In my opinion," Free said, "when they find him, it will be close to where he was raised, and it will look like 'Hogan's Heroes.' His bunker will be well prepared and pretty comfortable—with a cot and blankets, maybe."

Free's theory offers one of the few plausible explanations of how Rudolph could survive a summer and two winters in the wild while escaping detection by search teams, heat sensors, and helicopters. Another possibility is that Rudolph is sneaking out of the woods periodically to steal supplies from mountain homes, and that theory is supported by reports of prowlers, break-ins, and dog poisonings (possibly to stop any barking). Or he may be getting help—hiding out in a house or shed, or receiving drops of food and other aid. In any of these cases, a slipup, or a tip, represents the task force's best chance to catch Rudolph.

Last spring, after several months of futile searching, the task force decided to seek help from the public more aggressively. Rudolph's alleged links to the Atlanta bombings were publicized, and the F.B.I. placed the fugitive on its "ten most wanted" list, offering a million-dollar reward for information leading to his arrest—a sum that is twenty times that offered for others on the list. The reward is aimed at people like Donald and Omie Mosteller, who live on a remote farm bordering the Nantahala National Forest, close to where a truck stolen by Rudolph during his July foray for food was found. Searchers with automatic weapons often prowl the nearby woods, and helicopters have twice made emergency landings in their field.

"I told them ain't nothing to find, they're just wasting taxpayers' money," said Donald, a retired autoworker, who regards the agents as "city slickers" with no hope of catching the fugitive. Like almost all his neighbors in the Nantahala, Mosteller said the reward won't tempt him to tell the task force if Rudolph should appear. "I don't believe in ratting on people," he explained. A neighbor had informed on Mosteller's corn-whiskey still years ago, and he'd spent eight months in prison as a result. "If you ain't bothering nobody," he said, "I'm not going to bother you."

His wife, Omie, feels the same, though for a different reason. Rudolph "done the wrong thing, or they claim he did," she said of the abortion-clinic bombing. "But what they done is worse, killing little babies every day."

The Mostellers' views are shared by many in this fundamentalist community, where abortion and homosexuality are almost universally condemned. The news that Rudolph had also been charged in the Olympic bombing didn't change many people's minds, especially since another man, Richard Jewell, had already been mistakenly accused of the crime. "They'll tack the Saudi Arabian bombing on Rudolph next," said Doug Hampton, a sewing-machine mechanic. Like many people here, Hampton believes that the manhunt is a pretense, and that the task force is up to "something else"—hunting for marijuana crops, or establishing a permanent training camp, or, most likely, keeping an eye on militia groups. Even reports of Rudolph's capture wouldn't convince him otherwise. "They'd have to put him on the hood of a truck and haul him up and down the road like a buck deer before people here would believe it," Hampton told me.

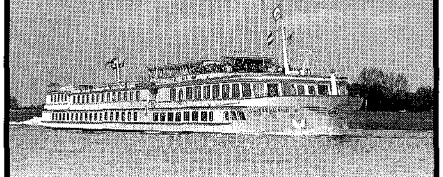
IF the sprawling search area can be said to have a ground zero, it lies near the Lake's End Grill, fifteen miles east of Andrews. The people who live in the Nantahala make up a scattered community with no true center. The grill is one of the few spots where they swap gossip over coffee, and where task-force members can eat lunch—while enduring a fair bit of ribbing. A sign out front declares, "Rudolph Eats Here." Above the grill is a sticker: "We Survived the Rudolph Manhunt 1998, '99? 2000?" Next to the register is a pile of T-shirts adorned with a man resembling Rudolph peeking from behind a tree, beside the words "1998 Western North Carolina Hide & Seek Champion Eric Rudolph." In a similar vein, a restaurant down the road in Andrews offers "F.B.I. Curly Fries," meant to signify that the agency is going in circles. Bumper stickers mocking the manhunt also abound, and there are two popular songs comparing the fugitive to Billy the Kid. One of them, "Run Rudolph Run," sounds like an Appalachian ballad and extolls the bombing of "that baby-killing factory." It ends, "God, it's getting awful scary when they're bringing in the military to hunt one man."

Almost everyone in the core search area has been questioned by the task force at least once, and comparing notes on this has become a source of mordant entertainment. "They said, 'What's your occupation?' " the ninety-two-year-old Ray Cochran recalled. "I said, 'Sitting in this damned chair.' " John Wagner, a retired auto-parts dealer, said, "They asked me, 'Does your dog bark at night?' I told them it's done that every night for twenty-five years." Wagner also scoffed at questions about his sense of security. "When I go out for wood at night to bank the fire, I've got a .38 on my shoulder and an AK-47, and I send my pit bull out first to make sure Eric's not there," he said wryly. "Total fear."

It is hard for many people here to believe that Rudolph, whom they knew as a polite and private man, might be a killer. Apart from brief stints in college and in the military, Rudolph lived close to his teen-age home in Nantahala for most of his adult life, mainly working as a handyman and carpenter. People who hired him were impressed by his skill. Neighbors recall that he once offered to help a farmer clear cattle from the road. He paid his bills on time (always in cash, because he distrusted credit cards and checkbooks), dressed neatly, and never caused trouble. "He didn't seem the type of person who would do something like that," said Mildred Grant, who works at a recycling plant in Nantahala. She became misty-eyed. "I thought a lot about him on Christmas Day. Did he have food? Was he warm?"

But other Nantahala residents, such as Willie Baldwin, the pastor of a nondenominational church that Rudolph briefly attended, are surprised and alarmed by such sympathy. "You cannot stop evil by doing evil," she said of the abortion-clinic bombing. Though Baldwin is native to the area, she has travelled all over the world as a missionary. "I've been a lot of places and this is the strangest," she said. "They're very clannish. Rudolph, if he did one nice thing, then he's a fine guy and they can't see past that. He's one of the clan."

BEYOND the Nantahala hollows, in the towns of Andrews and Murphy, Rudolph made less of an impression, except for his looks. Women invariably describe him as strikingly handsome, with high cheekbones, piercing blue eyes, and longish brown hair. The women who work at Plaza Video—one of the few places where he was seen regularly—tried to chat him up, but he didn't reciprocate. Janice Stiles recalled one of the last times she saw him at the video shop, on Super Bowl Sunday just before the Alabama bombing. "I was surprised to see him and said wasn't he going to watch the Super Bowl? And



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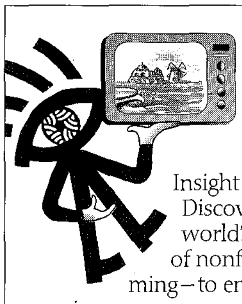

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"O.K., then. You may kiss, shake hands, and come out married."

• •

he said, 'Super Bowl? Today's the Super Bowl?' I thought that was strange. What male in America wouldn't know it was Super Bowl Sunday?"

Rudolph also used to visit a salon called Klippers & Kurls, to lie on a tanning bed, but he didn't talk much there, either. One of the few people who got to know Rudolph was an outgoing waitress who dated him in the spring and summer of 1997, shortly before he disappeared. "He's a real clean-cut, real good-looking guy, real quiet," she told me. The two mostly watched movies at her place or went to cookouts. But after a while she began to find his silence strange, and broke off the relationship.

Later, when details of his life emerged on the news, she realized he'd lied to her. "He told me he was living with his uncle in Tennessee. I said, 'Leave your number on my machine,' but he said his uncle didn't have a phone." The fact was that Rudolph lived near her, in a place called Vengeance Creek. "He told me he fought fires out West," she said. He also warned that because of his job he might be "gone for a few months." But she doesn't recall Rudolph's expressing any opinions about abortion or gays or the government. "I wonder if, maybe down deep in his own way, he was trying to protect me," she said.

RUDOLPH may have kept his beliefs to himself, but he was clearly exposed to extremist views from an early age. As a ninth grader at Nantahala School, he wrote a paper denying the existence of the Holocaust and gave the teacher neo-Nazi literature as source material. Classmates recall that he regarded Social Security numbers as a form of government spying. Eric's younger brother Jamie, a musician who lives in Manhattan and is openly gay, said in an interview with *Salon* that he and Eric were bullied and derided as outsiders when they came to North Carolina. Jamie wondered if his brother's embrace of right-wing views might have been an attempt to fit in. (An older brother, Daniel, was so upset by the manhunt that shortly after the search began he videotaped himself using a power saw to cut his own hand off, then sent the tape to news outlets, declaring, "This is for the F.B.I. and the media." The hand was later reattached.)

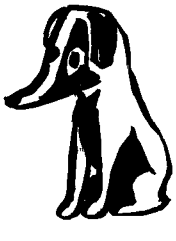
When Eric was a teen-ager, his mother, Patricia, took him and Jamie to live for several months at a church commune in Missouri which was linked to Christian Identity—a movement that believes Jews are the product of Eve's mating with Satan, and that blacks are "mud people." Eric was also deeply influenced by Tom Branham, a sawmill operator who lived next to the Rudolphs in North Carolina and took the teen-ager under his wing. Branham, whose house looks like a cement-block bunker, was arrested in the mid-nineteen-eighties for illegal possession of explosives and firearms, including machine guns, dynamite, and blasting caps. Patricia Rudolph helped post his bond. Branham initially served as his own attorney, decrying the government in his court filings. He was convicted, but the charges were dismissed on appeal.

Characters such as Branham are startlingly common in the Nantahala. One man lives in a fortress with gun parapets, with a swastika laid into the floor, and with a security fence on which a sign says "WARNING: Will Shoot Trespassers." In fact, southwestern North Carolina, like the Ozarks and western Montana, has become one of the nation's leading havens for right-wing groups. "We've got Christian Identity, we've got Church of the Remnant, we've got Freemen, we've got Patriots, we've got Phinehas Priests, we've got all manner of funny-thinking people," said a local official, who asked that he not be named, because he is elected and fears reprisal. His files, and those at other county courthouses in the area, bulge with pseudo-legal documents challenging the state's authority to collect tax liens or issue driver's licenses—even subpoenaing officials to appear in kangaroo "common law" courts.

Many extremists who now live in the area were drawn to it in recent years by Nord Davis, a prominent Christian Identity leader, whose family's hundred-and-thirty-acre property near Andrews is flanked by a guardhouse and a monument to the first Minuteman killed at Concord. Until his death, in 1997, Davis headed a militia-style force called Northpoint Tactical Teams, and used his property to host paramilitary training sessions called SPIKE, which stands for "specially prepared individuals for key events." Davis also published a popular newsletter railing against Jews, blacks, abortionists, homosexuals, the F.B.I., and the New World Order.

Another group, Church of the Remnant, has designated southwestern North Carolina as part of a "separatist homeland" called Republica, which extends into northern Georgia and eastern Tennessee. (Anti-government groups like to sow jurisdictional confusion.) In an essay entitled "Come to Republica!," widely circulated in newsletters and on the Internet, the Church urges migration to the area to create "a strong operational base from which to make holy war upon the hounds of Hell!"

In this environment, "Eric Rudolph was not an anomaly," said Mark Potok, a researcher with the Southern Poverty Law Center, which is one of the nation's leading monitors of hate groups. The center says it has evidence from undercover sources that Rudolph was a Christian Identity believer and an acolyte of Nord Davis. Though Rudolph was, by all accounts, a loner, and may not have formally joined any group, sources familiar with the investigation say that items taken from his home, truck, and storage unit include survivalist, anti-abortion, and neo-Nazi literature (and also a gas mask, shell casings, a rifle scope, and a text called "How to Build Bombs of Mass Destruction Inexpensively").



Anonymous letters sent after several of Rudolph's alleged bombings claimed that the attacks were aimed at "facilities that murder children," and at "sodomites" and law-enforcement officials who represent "the ungodly Communist regime in New York and your legaslative-bureucratic lackey's in Washington." The letters were signed "Army of God," which experts on terrorism say is probably a shadowy flag under which various anti-abortion fanatics have acted, rather than a cohesive group. Potok explained that the views expressed in the letters, and their choice of targets, clearly reflect Christian Identity beliefs. "The Olympics is the apotheosis of race-mixing, of one-worldism, of everything Identity despises," he said. One of the letters ends with the phrase "Death to the New World Order."

THE only time that Rudolph is known to have emerged from the woods, in July, he seems to have made a calculated approach to a like-minded acquaintance. He walked up to the ridge-top home of a health-food-store owner named George Nordmann and asked for food, batteries, Sterno, and writing supplies. The fugitive, slimmed by six months in the woods, and wearing a beard and ponytail, said he'd return in two days. Nordmann, uneasy about the prospect of another encounter with Rudolph, decided to stay at his store that night. While Nordmann was away from home, Rudolph stole about a hundred pounds of food, loaded it into Nordmann's ancient pickup, and drove off, leaving five hundred dollars on Nordmann's counter. It wasn't until the day after the theft—four days after he had met with Rudolph—that Nordmann reported his encounter. The pickup was later found in a remote campground.

Nordmann won't talk about his contact with Rudolph, but when I visited his store in Andrews he readily shared his political and religious convictions. "What is coming is a fulfillment of the chastisement of humanity based on the prophecy of Fatima," he began, and he went on to talk about the apocalypse, the Y2K crisis, the infiltration into the Catholic Church of Masons and Communists, and a covert government program to reduce world population.

The frequent airing of such views over the past year by numerous people in the area has profoundly disturbed local moderates, many of whom hadn't recognized the depth of extremism in their community. In November, fifteen church leaders signed a letter to local newspapers condemning the crimes that Rudolph is accused of. The clerics acted out of concern that their previous silence might suggest that they condoned such violence. In response, they received anonymous letters, signed "A TRUE MAN of YAHWEH," that attacked their "judaised churches" and declared, "THE LAW of YAHWEH requires

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the killing of the MURDERER (abortionists murder the innocent)."

Meanwhile, flyers have been sent to local merchants and left on windshields at Wal-Mart, which decry the task force and evoke memories of F.B.I. and A.T.F. actions at Waco, Texas, and Ruby Ridge, Idaho. One flyer claims that a "secret state of emergency" has been established in western North Carolina. "Citizens, this town is under siege," it states. "How long will we tolerate the presence of these brutal tyrants???" Another, carrying a picture of the American flag, begins, "Will the Jack-Booted Thugs (FBI—ATF—or Whatever) Create a situation here in our Peaceful Mountain Region, leading to a repeat of the Incident at Concord?" Letters to the editor of the local paper have likened the task force to "the Gestapo," and some local residents have complained about the presence of African-American agents.

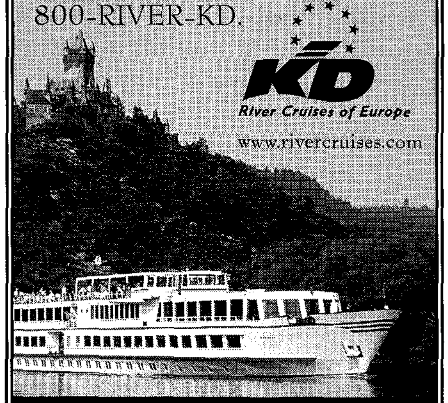
Right-wing hysteria about the manhunt has also spread nationwide in newsletters and on the Internet. In Andrews, the mayor's office, the Chamber of Commerce, and the police have fielded calls from across the country, mostly from "militia people," Clay Hardin, the police chief, said. "They want to find out if it's true that there are tanks here, and National Guard, and that the F.B.I. has set up compounds way back in the boonies." Last summer, Bo Gritz, a prominent militia leader, led a team into the Nantahala to conduct its own search for Rudolph, promising to give him "a safe corridor" and legal representation by "Patriot" attorneys. After one week, Gritz and his followers returned home.

Apart from such periodic spectacles, the manhunt has now become a familiar part of the local routine—and, to some, a welcome one. Motels, guesthouses, restaurants, and gas stations have been doing so well that the president of the Andrews Chamber of Commerce joked that Rudolph should be named Businessman of the Year. Local police are pleased, too: the task force provided a dog team during a recent bomb scare (unrelated to the search), and several agents detained a knife-wielding man at a local Popeye's. Hunting violations are down now that so many agents are combing the hills. "I wish they'd stay," the mayor of Andrews, Jim Dailey, said, suggesting that his town could become a law-enforcement "hub for the Southeast."

Many of the roughly two hundred agents spend their free time pumping iron in a local gym, eating out, attending church, and going to high-school basketball games. After a recent meeting with local ministers, the task force agreed to curtail helicopter flights on Sundays and on Wednesday nights, when many people here go to church. Investigators have also met with groups such as the Lions' Club, to buff the task force's image and share evidence about the bombs that Rudolph is alleged to have used. "That had an effect on me," said Moore, the surgeon, who knows about explosives from his Army service. "I'm to the right of Attila the Hun, but when I saw what they showed us there—satchel charges with steel plates and nails—that's a Claymore mine, an antipersonnel device." Authorities say that the pipe bomb planted at the Olympics could have killed hundreds if the shrapnel had dispersed in the way that the bomber intended.

Many residents suspect that Rudolph fled the area long ago, yet, publicly at least, the task force remains confident. A stream of Rudolph sightings—at a pizza parlor in West Virginia, and at a local campground where a teen-ager says she partied with the fugitive—have proved untrue, and there is no evidence that Rudolph has left the Nantahala. The search is as intensive as ever, but spring comes early to Appalachia, and time may be running out.

Meanwhile, at the county seat, in Murphy, court officials are holding more than two thousand dollars for Eric Rudolph—proceeds from an auction of items seized at his home and from his storage locker. If he ever collects the money, Rudolph will owe much of it to Plaza Video. Though the store says Rudolph was never once tardy returning a film, a daily printout of delinquent customers now has his name at the top of the list, with "Kull the Conqueror" three hundred and sixty-eight days overdue at the time of my visit. Janice Stiles punched a calculator and tallied the late fee. "Nine hundred and seventy-five dollars and twenty cents," she said. "Somehow I don't think we'll be seeing Eric anytime soon." ♦



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SHOUTS & MURMURS

NEWS FROM THE NO-FLY ZONE

BY BRUCE McCALL

ENOUGH of Saddam's guff! It's high time to defend Iraqi airspace against the Iraqis. Operation "Wipe That Smirk Off His Face" begins.

STAGE 1, DAY 1: Kathmandu-based FX-2 Weedwhacker jets sweep in low over the No-Fly Zone and go for evil's nasal passages. They pepper Baghdad with "Gesundheit" sneezing-powder bombs, instantly wiping out Iraq's remaining facial-tissue stocks, and reducing every airbase, anti-aircraft installation, and radar facility to nose-blowing, watery-eyed, sinus-headache chaos. Official damage estimate: a hundred and twelve per cent. Chance of recovery: zero.

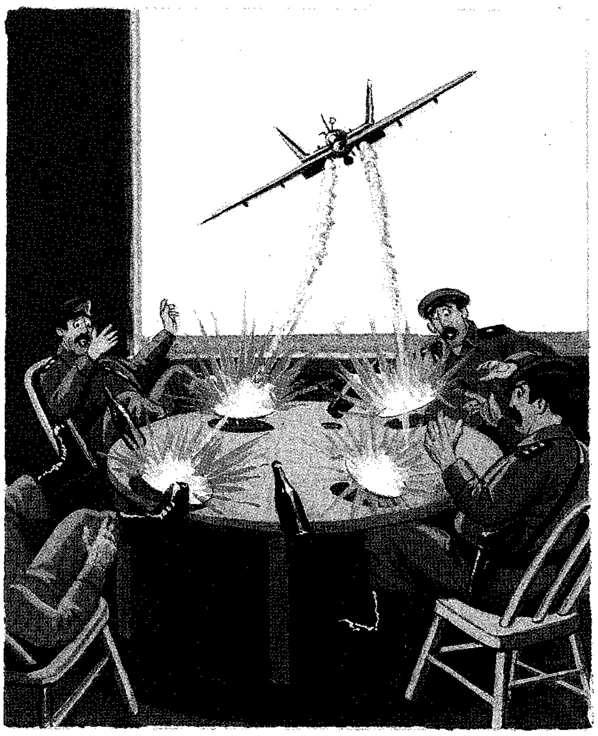
Meanwhile, savings-and-loan executives fleeing Iraq describe a jittery Saddam, war chest virtually empty, applying for second mortgages on his string of remote secret palaces and using his in-laws as collateral.

STAGE 2, DAY 2: Saddam to Free World: "Nyah nyah—missed!" No sooner has Saddam uttered his insolent taunts than A-99 Babehounds swoop in from their secret bases in New Zealand to hit suspected élite Republican Guard clubhouses with hummus-seeking "Party Crasher" air-to-dining-table missiles. Early intelligence confirms that the ensuing hunger strikes have already hobbled the entire Iraqi air-defense infrastructure—permanently.

Real-estate agents fleeing Iraq tell of a panicky Saddam, his every credit card maxed out, offering his string of remote secret palaces to the Lilith Tour at cut-rate rental prices.

STAGE 3, DAY 3: A desperate Saddam is reportedly airlifting Burger King takeout from Lebanon to his No-Fly Zone forces. Roaring in at curb level, carrier-borne Navy BX-200 Skunkhawks fire pinpoint-accurate "Auto-Cook" ordnance to short-circuit every suspected élite Republican Guard microwave oven. An estimated four million burgers are left to spoil in the desert sun. Hours later, intelligence overflights show that food riots among Saddam's meat-crazed troops have disrupted his vaunted fighting machine—for all time.

STAGE 4, DAY 4: U.N. Security Council officials launch a fresh strategic initiative after Saddam is reported to be mail-ordering food for his troops from Harry and David. Thoughtwave-guided Svengali mind-reading missiles strike every suspected élite Republican Guard think tank in the No-Fly Zone at peak mental-concentration time. Mission accomplished: not an élite Republican Guard mind is left unread. Pentagon spokesmen announce that Saddam's ability to dream up new anti-U.S. stunts undetected is crippled—at a minimum, forever.



BRUCE McCALL

STAGE 5, DAY 5: Monitored Baghdad taxi-radio traffic indicates that, with his top strategists' minds now open books, Saddam is forcing schoolchildren and housewives to mastermind military maneuvers. Retaliation comes within minutes: U.S. G-22 Kickass jets deploying synapse-freezing "Duh" sponge-tipped missiles hit every head in every civilian neighborhood suspected to be under élite Republican Guard control. In one daring preemptive strike, Saddam's war-making thought processes are paralyzed—forever and a day.

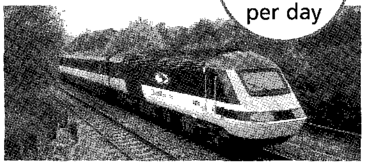
Saddam is said by restaurant brokers fleeing Iraq to be negotiating the sublet of his string of remote secret palaces to Starbucks.

STAGE 6, DAY 6: U.S. BF-77 Skysnoop ultra-high-altitude surveillance planes patrolling the No-Fly Zone report no élite Republican Guard activity—*just what the sly Saddam wants them to report.* Pentagon and Whitehall officials whirl into action. Mach-17 U.S. B-99 Mugwumps and British HP-2 Budgies zoom in from the Seychelles and carpet-bomb the No-Fly Zone with an estimated ten million "No-Doz" self-activating sleep-deprivation pellets. Saddam and his élite Republican Guard are caught napping—but they'll never catch so much as forty winks, ever again.

Fleeing deed-searchers bring a blockbuster with them out of Iraq: there is no string of remote secret palaces. Another of oily Saddam's hollow bluffs, exposed.

STAGE 7, DAY 7: Spy satellites show a sleep-deprived Saddam taking a breather. But no rest for the wicked! Unleashing hundreds of super-accurate aloe-sensing "Coppertone" anti-tan missiles at close range, U.S. X-50 Mulchmakers score direct poolside hits on Saddam's élite Republican Guard units in their suspected R. and R. retreats all over the No-Fly Zone.

Official results: Fifty-four missions flown, 11,298 targets hammered. The President goes on nationwide TV to announce that Saddam's plot to rest and fight another day is a shambles—in perpetuity. ♦



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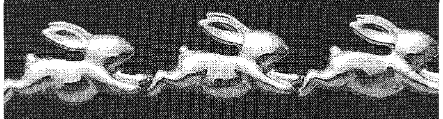

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THE RACE TRACK

THE MAGIC MAN

Has the trainer Bob Baffert found a sure way to win the Kentucky Derby?

BY BILL BARICH

IN the world of thoroughbred racing, Bob Baffert holds all the aces these days. No other trainer comes close to matching his recent success. Last year alone, his horses earned almost twelve million dollars in purse money. In 1997, Silver Charm, his star colt, won both the Kentucky Derby and the Preakness. Another colt, Real Quiet, did the same thing the following year. Baffert's rivals grumble about a secret weapon, but he says he just trusts his instincts and has extraordinary luck. That's another way of saying he's superstitious. He has certain neckties—power ties—that he'll wear only to big races. He refers to his favorite, a yellow Hermès, as "kick-ass." If a tie fails to deliver, it dies. Baffert stomped on one loser, and he invited his grooms to stomp on it. The tie was left behind in the dust, looking, he says, "as evil as a snake."

Baffert, at forty-six, is a slight man with prematurely white hair and a confident attitude. Being a creature of habit, he follows the same routine every day, driving from his home, in Huntington Beach, California, to Santa Anita, where he has forty horses stabled. His car is a new B.M.W. 740, with a sport package and a special Kentucky Derby license plate. He paid cash for the car, and doesn't care if you know that. His work clothes seldom vary—jeans, a plain shirt, boots, and, if the weather's cold, a navy-blue jacket—and he always has on funky little sunglasses, which hide his eyes and discourage interpretation. The tools of his trade are simple—a stopwatch, a two-way radio, and a cell phone that never stops ringing. "It's the nineties, buddy," he'll tell you, with a grin.

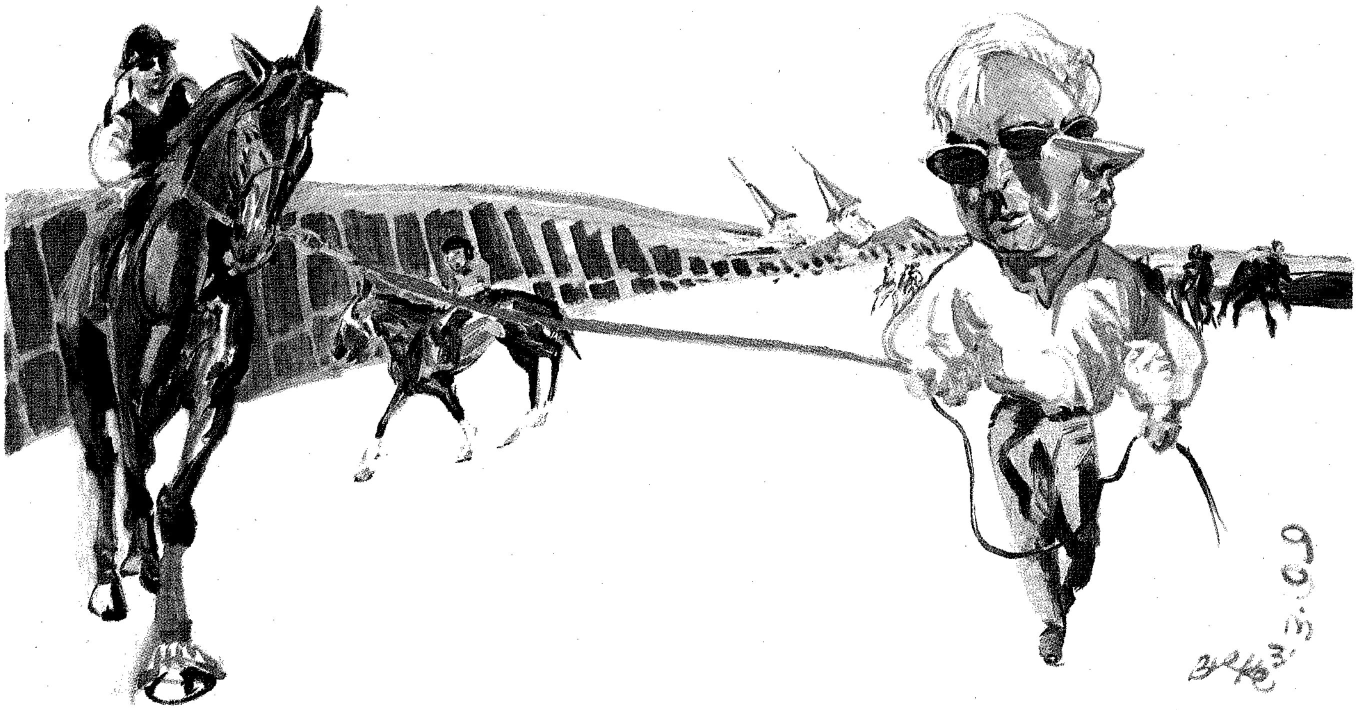
Most trainers are early birds, and get to the track around dawn, but Baffert comes a little later. His staff, of some fifty handpicked and well-paid people, takes care of the stock in his absence. The barn he's been assigned is close to a parking lot and easy for visitors to find. When I stopped by one morning in December, the operation was in full swing. I sat on a fence to wait for Baffert and watched some finches swoop around a pepper tree. The barn is an old wooden building with flaking green paint, and the silks of Silver Charm and Real Quiet are tacked up on it, in triumphant display. Hired hands were busy walking hots—horses just back from a gallop. I could smell manure and hear the horses breathing. It was impossible not to feel good.

Although the Triple Crown races were months away, Baffert was already gearing up for them. He hopes to win his third straight Derby, an unprecedented feat for a trainer, but the rate at which he has risen to the top of his field has also been unprecedented. When he started training thoroughbreds, in 1989, his stable consisted of a single horse—Hidden Royalty, a thirty-two-thousand-dollar claimer—but now he handles colts as valuable as a Malibu beach house. He's so popular that owners beg him to take on their stock, and this can be a problem. Some owners don't listen very well. They have expectations and make demands. They don't heed the trainer's advice. If that happens, Baffert drops them. He hates stress, he told me once, because it gets in the way of having fun.

When Baffert arrived, we walked down to the track to watch the morning workouts. It was a beautiful day, bright and clear, and the San Gabriel Mountains stood out against a smogless sky. "Look at that!" Baffert said appreciatively. I followed him to a special spot by the grandstand, where he likes to hang out, far away from the other trainers. This may or may not be deliberate, but it adds to his mystique. His cell phone rang immediately, and he wandered off for a private chat. It could be anybody calling—someone from Dubai, where Silver Charm won the four-million-dollar World Cup last year, or maybe one of his four kids with a question—but his competitors would never know. Like the shades, that's part of his game plan. Baffert drives everybody nuts and gets a kick out of doing it.

On the track, his horses were flying by, offering a majestic pageant of muscle, speed, and color. Here came Silver Charm himself, a stunning gray, with his neck curled and his ears pricked, tugging away as if he wanted to run a hundred miles. Real Quiet rolled through next, more awkward-looking but just as game—a long-striding colt who, even as a four-year-old, may still be developing. Then Excellent Meeting and Silverbulletday galloped past, a pair of brilliant fillies, whose coats shone in the sun. Baffert clocked them and oohed and ahed at the fractions. He was using his radio to instruct his exercise riders and monitor the action at his barn. To a Mexican jockey, he shouted encouragement in Spanish. He was at the hub of things, without ever moving an inch.

There's nothing like the right dream coming true. I could see how proud Baffert was. "Most powerful stable in North America," he said of his operation, not in a bragging way but as if he had his fingers crossed. He's still in awe of his good fortune. "Hope I don't blow it."



Baffert is wary of easy races, thinking jockeys, and railbirds looking for track tips.

PHILIP BURKE

BOB BAFFERT grew up on a cattle ranch in Nogales, Arizona, with six brothers and sisters, but he was the only child who liked to ride. His favorite among the ranch's quarter horses was Baffert's Heller, a tough little customer. When Bob was ten, he would dash from the school bus to the corral and lavish attention on him, but in the saddle the boy was scared, and the horse knew it. Heller always tried to buck him off. The ranch cowboys had no such trouble. Heller went easy on them, because they were grown men—and big—while Bob was small. "That's how smart horses are," he said. "They're usually sweet, but they can smell fear a mile away." With Heller, he mastered his fear at last, and from then on he rode the horse hard and well.

Baffert began training quarter horses in his teens, working for his father. He majored in animal sciences at the University of Arizona, and after he graduated, in 1977, he continued training horses as a hobby. He later decided to go pro, and ran his stock at dusty tracks around the Southwest. Those tracks were rough, and the crowd could be rowdy. Baffert did extremely well, but quarter horses aren't as challenging or complicated as thoroughbreds, and the races are strictly one-dimensional sprints. The longest covers only eight hundred and seventy yards. There wasn't much strategy involved, so Baffert kept getting bored. He'd take a job in the real world—as a substitute teacher, say, or selling livestock pharmaceutical supplies for a Tucson feed store—but the track always drew him back.

As we stood watching the horses, people drifted by and stopped to talk. Most of them wanted something from Baffert—a tip, a loan, a transfer of the magic. An elderly handicapper limped over, clutching a crumpled *Racing Form* that he'd decorated with runic symbols and spidery handwriting, the leavings of some arcane and almost certainly useless system. Baffert had a filly called Capote's Caper entered in the first race at Hollywood Park that afternoon, and asked how she looked. "Six lengths better than anybody else!" the old guy cried.

"Yeah, well," Baffert said, with a sigh. "The easy races are the toughest to win."

An agent for Chris McCarron, the great jockey, strolled up next. McCarron was scheduled to ride Prime Timber, one of Baffert's main Derby hopefuls,

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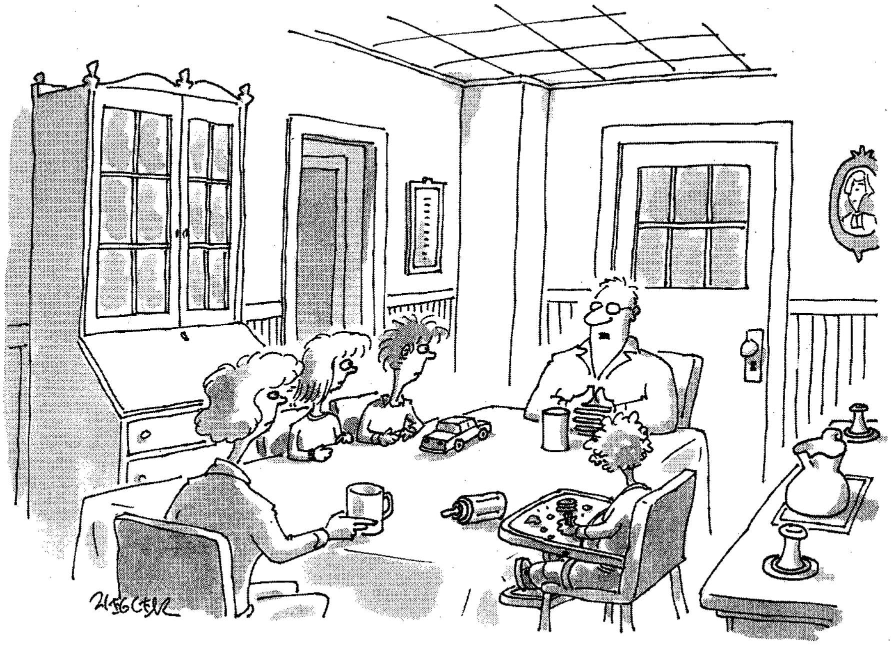
"McCarron's going to screw up tomorrow," Baffert said, teasing the agent. "He'll start thinking."

"He won't think," the agent promised.

To Baffert, a thinking jockey is as bad as a difficult owner or a drunken groom. As an example, he brought up the case of Kent Desormeaux, who booted home Real Quiet in the '98 Derby, at long-shot odds of eight to one. Desormeaux walked into the paddock at Churchill Downs on race day to talk with the boss about how he planned to ride. In the midst of julep-induced pandemonium, while Baffert's nerves were crackling, Desormeaux spouted theories and plotted tactics, waxing profound about the intricate journey he imagined for himself and his mount. Desormeaux was blatantly *thinking*, and Baffert couldn't believe it. "Cut it out, Kent!" he warned the jockey. "Believe me, son, you're on a loaded gun." That was the end of it, and Real Quiet wound up in the winner's circle.

It was Mike Pegram, Real Quiet's owner, who persuaded Baffert to jump from quarter horses into the big leagues. Baffert had moved his stable from Arizona to Southern California in 1983, and he had become a fixture at Los Alamitos, where he pulled down half a million in purses in 1990, but he was ready for a new challenge. Among the thoroughbreds he eventually bought and trained for Pegram was a Kentucky-bred that cost only seventeen thousand dollars at auction. The colt looked weirdly skinny from a head-on angle, as if he belonged in a tropical aquarium, so Baffert called him "the fish." As for Pegram, he thought the horse might have a terminal disease. This was Real Quiet, who went on to lose his first seven races.

There's no better testament to Baffert's patience and skill than the job he did with Real Quiet. Any trainer will stick with a classy prospect for a while, but most trainers tend to give up on cheap horses after a failure or two. Baffert saw a quality he liked, though, and he never doubted his intuition. He regards himself as a keen judge of character, even in horses, but he can't explain why. "I go by the feeling," he said. "I like a certain look, a certain conformation. I swear, I have ESP at times. Hey, I'm a real good gambler with other people's money." In Real Quiet he recognized a talented colt that needed room to grow, so he didn't push. The colt's progress was barely visible to outsiders, and when Baffert shipped him to a lowly New Mexico track for a race it was viewed as a sign of surrender. (The race was in fact a five-hundred-thousand-dollar stakes. Baffert enjoys competing in easier events in places other than California and refers to it as "taking the back road," but it didn't work this time. Even against lesser stock, Real Quiet lost once more.) Ultimately, the colt put on weight, became strong, quick, and durable, and re-



"Kids, your mother and I have spent so much money on health insurance this year that instead of vacation we're all going to go in for elective surgery."

paid his trainer's faith many times over.

Because Baffert has performed such miracles, the experts figure he'll do even better now that he has horses with pedigrees. He tries to ignore the pressure, but it's there. Success on a grand scale can ruin a trainer. It forces him to be a businessman, and nobody on the backstretch is much interested in business. When Baffert began making money, his account books were in chaos until he hired a financial manager. He's suffering the first pangs of fame, too—the autograph-seekers, the glad-handers. "I can't go anywhere anymore," he complains. Celebrity goes against the grain of racetrack life, with its deep craving for simplicity and its low tolerance for affectation of any kind. Away from work, Baffert is most content when he's hanging out with his kids. Their names are Taylor, Canyon, Forest, and Savannah, and they never ask him for any inside information.

Still, Baffert can't avoid the fact that he has a sensational crop of three-year-olds in his barn. The one most respected at present is Exploit, whose sire, Storm Cat, is among the country's most expensive and desirable stallions. Bob and Beverly Lewis, who also own Silver Charm, paid five hundred and twenty-five thousand dollars for Exploit as a weanling. The notion was to pinhook him—sell him as a yearling—but no bidder met the reserve price of a million and a half dollars. (The bidding did reach a million four hundred and fifty thousand.) Baffert remained unconcerned. The colt had the build of a runner, he said, and that has proved to be an understatement. Exploit won his first four races handily, including a big victory in the Kentucky Jockey Club Stakes, at Churchill Downs, going around two turns.

When Exploit hit the track, Baffert took out his stopwatch and did some clocking. As the colt rushed by the grandstand, I had a chance to admire him up close. I thought Exploit looked splendid, working well within himself, effortlessly. He had a determined, energetic stride, his head down and his legs pumping.

"Does he look like a Derby horse to you?" Baffert asked. He didn't sound doubtful, just curious about the future. "He's on the small side, but he's got a lot of gas in his tank."

Toward the end of the workouts, we joined the crowd at the official Clockers'

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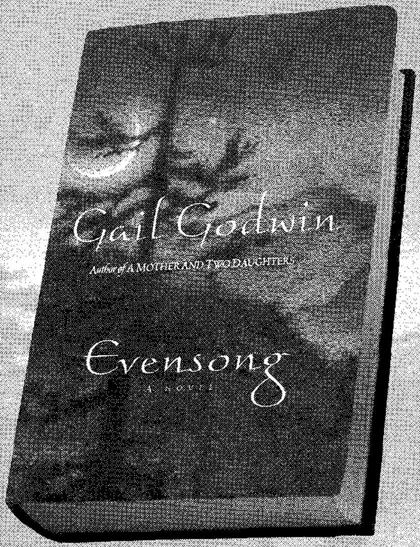

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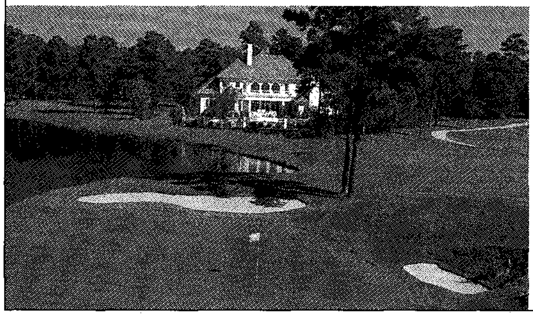

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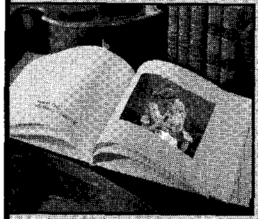

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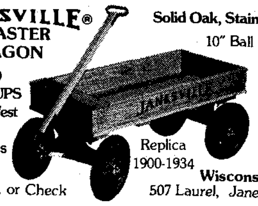

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Corner, where the less secretive types gather to gossip. Baffert bought us some coffee and chatted with the woman behind the counter, who had been on vacation in the Sierra Nevada and boasted that she'd caught more trout than her husband had. A bloodstock agent cornered Baffert right after that to discuss the possibility of importing some horses from Argentina. Then a railbird butted in, claiming that he'd put down a big morning-line bet on Prime Timber at a Vegas casino.

"What were the odds?" Baffert wanted to know.

"Eighteen to one. I'm going to be a rich man on Derby Day," the railbird said smugly.

Baffert made no reply.

An exercise rider came over to pay court, his whip jammed in his back pocket. He had his little boy with him. The boy was about seven and wore a leather jacket so scraped up and abused that a truck might have mashed it.

"What do you want for Christmas?" Baffert asked. "Other than a new jacket, I mean."

The kid rolled with the punch. "When's Silver Charm gonna run again?" he asked.

"He looked good today, didn't he, buddy?"

"He looked beautiful."

"Well, I better find a race for him, then."

Baffert seldom points his horses toward a particular event. Instead, he lets them round into shape, and when they're prime and ready he shops for a race they have a chance of winning. This sounds elementary, but the condition book, as it is called, is probably the knottiest document at any track. It has nothing to do with the relative muddiness or dryness of the course. Instead, it sets out the conditions a horse must meet to enter a race, in language as dense as a brick. Some trainers never quite master it, but Baffert studies it diligently. The trick is not to aim too high and run a horse where it doesn't belong. "Can't make chicken salad out of chickenshit," Baffert likes to say.

WE returned to his barn around ten. Hot-walkers were still at work, and a few colts and fillies were being bathed; steam came off them in the cool morning air. Before going on to his office, Baffert stuck his head into Silver

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Charm's stall and fed him some carrots. The office is unusually neat by racetrack standards, and has a fax and some computers. There were framed photographs of Baffert and Silver Charm after the Derby and the Preakness. He wore the same tie in both pictures. "I should have changed it for the Belmont," he said wistfully. "It would have been nice to earn the Triple Crown."

A horseshoer was at work just outside the door, hammering away in his leather chaps, and he let it drop that he'd shoed the last four Derby winners in a row.

"What's the record?" I asked him, joking.

He lifted his head to concentrate. "Somebody from Calumet Farm, I guess," he said. "Back when they used to win it every year."

Around eleven, Baffert fired up his BMW, and we left for Hollywood Park. Capote's Caper ran well in her race and led to the head of the stretch, only to be passed in the lane and finish second—an easy race that was tough to win, just as Baffert had predicted.

He didn't fare much better in the Futurity on Saturday. Prime Timber, undefeated in his only two starts, put on a good show, accelerating when McCarron asked him to, and taking command, but Tactical Cat, a lightly regarded horse from D. Wayne Lukas's stable, nipped him at the wire. There was worse news for Baffert, though. Another colt he'd entered, Premier Property—a speedster who hadn't lost in three starts—tired at the distance, kept running anyway, and took a bad misstep, fracturing three metacarpal bones in his lower left foreleg. He had to be destroyed—a two-year-old in perfect condition snatched up in an instant, all for trying so hard.

"You never get used to that," Baffert told me later. "It's the most awful thing about racing, when you see a horse go down."

BAFFERT and Lukas are not exactly close pals. There's a keen edge of competition between them, so Baffert looked forward to another day. He got his chance for revenge in early February, when Exploit made his '99 début, in the San Vicente Stakes, at Santa Anita, against Lukas's Yes It's True and a colt named Aristotle, from Randy Bradshaw's barn. The San Vicente is a prep race that everyone watches carefully, because six of its winners, including Silver Charm, have gone on to take the Derby. For Exploit it would be a return to the track after a long, ten-week layoff, but he still looked invincible in the paddock. Almost pure black, with white stockings banding three of his legs, he pranced and pricked his ears and could barely contain himself.

A three-horse field puts extra pressure on a jockey, because tactics are of vital importance. Chris McCarron was concerned about Exploit's going too fast too soon, so for the early part of the race he let the colt settle at a moderate pace, in company with Yes It's True. But Lukas's entry couldn't get the seven-furlong distance and eventually faded, while Exploit went into overdrive. Just when it appeared that he might fly to the wire untested, Aristotle swooped into the picture. Down the stretch, the two horses were hooked, but Exploit showed his class by digging deep and finding the little bit extra he needed to win. It was a gritty performance, from a horse that was clearly something special. But how much had the effort cost him? We'd find out when he ran next, in the San Felipe Stakes, on March 13th.

Baffert savored the victory, but he knew how many obstacles he still had to surmount before buying any plane tickets to Louisville. The Derby was all about waiting, he said—waiting and luck. A trainer had to pray that one of his colts peaked at the right time. It could be Exploit or Prime Timber, Finder's Gold or General Challenge. The more prospects you had, the better your chances were. All Baffert could do was hope.

"The Kentucky Derby's the only race in the world," he told me. "I used to say I'd quit if I ever won it, but now I want to go every year. I don't drink or do drugs. That race is my addiction. It *motivates* me." He added that he always felt on edge during the post parade, and got more and more nervous until the moment when his horse was actually in the starting gate.

"What happens then?"

"Then I can relax," he said. "My job's done. Once the gate opens, there's nothing left to do but scream like hell." ◆

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[*Adv. in the Oakland Tribune*]

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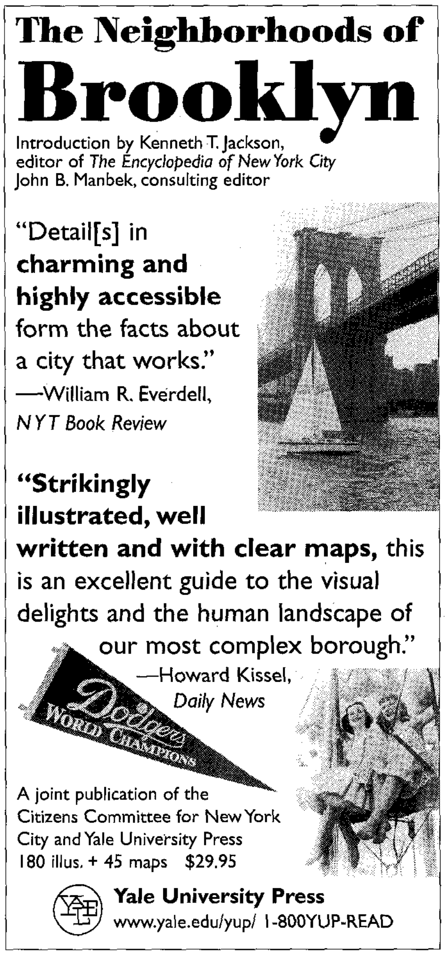
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ANNALS OF CRIME

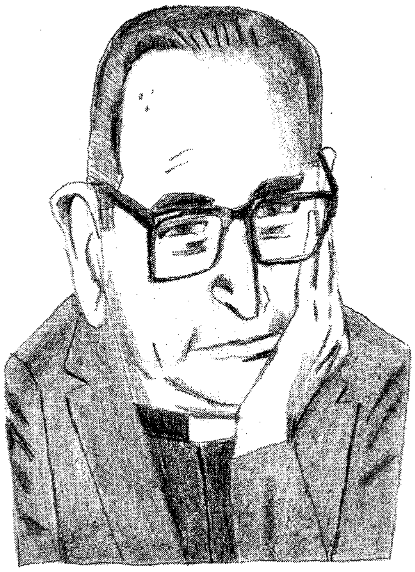
MURDER COMES FOR THE BISHOP

Was the most prominent human-rights activist in Guatemala killed by a homosexual lover, a gang of church thieves, or an Army hit squad?

BY FRANCISCO GOLDMAN

On the afternoon of April 26th last year, a few hours before he was bludgeoned to death in his parish-house garage, Bishop Juan Gerardi Conedera was drinking *whiskitos* and telling stories at a small gathering in the back-yard garden of a friend's house. Bishop Gerardi's stories were amusing and sometimes off-color. He was a *chistoso*, a joker. "In a meeting with him, you would get this whole repertory of jokes," Father Mario Orantes Nájera, the Bishop's vice-parish priest, told police investigators two days later. "I wish you could have known him." Guatemalans admire a man who can tell *chistes*. A good *chiste* is a defense against despair and the inner solitude that comes from not being able to speak one's mind. Guatemalans have long been known for their reserve and secretiveness, even gloominess. "Men remoter than mountains" was how Wallace Stevens put it in a poem he wrote after visiting Guatemala. Two separate, gravely ceremonious, phantasmagoria-prone cultures, Spanish Catholic and Mayan pagan, shaped the country's national character, along with centuries of cruelty and isolation. In 1885, a Nicaraguan political exile and writer, Enrique Guzmán, described the country as a vicious police state, filled with so many government informers that "even the drunks are discreet"—an observation that has never ceased to be quoted because it has never stopped seeming true.

Bishop Gerardi was a big man, and still robust, even though he was seventy-five years old. He was over six feet tall and weighed more than two hundred pounds. He had a broad chest and back, a prominent ruddy nose, and thick, curly gray hair. His friends recall his affection for alcohol, his beloved *whiskitos*, as well as his down-to-earth intelligence and a nearly clairvoyant understanding of Guatemala's tangled, extremist, and nasty politics, which made him the most trusted adviser on such matters to Archbishop Próspero Penados del Barrio, who was less worldly, more purely pastoral. As the founder and director of the Archdiocese's Office of Human Rights, ODHA, Gerardi was an important Church spokesman.

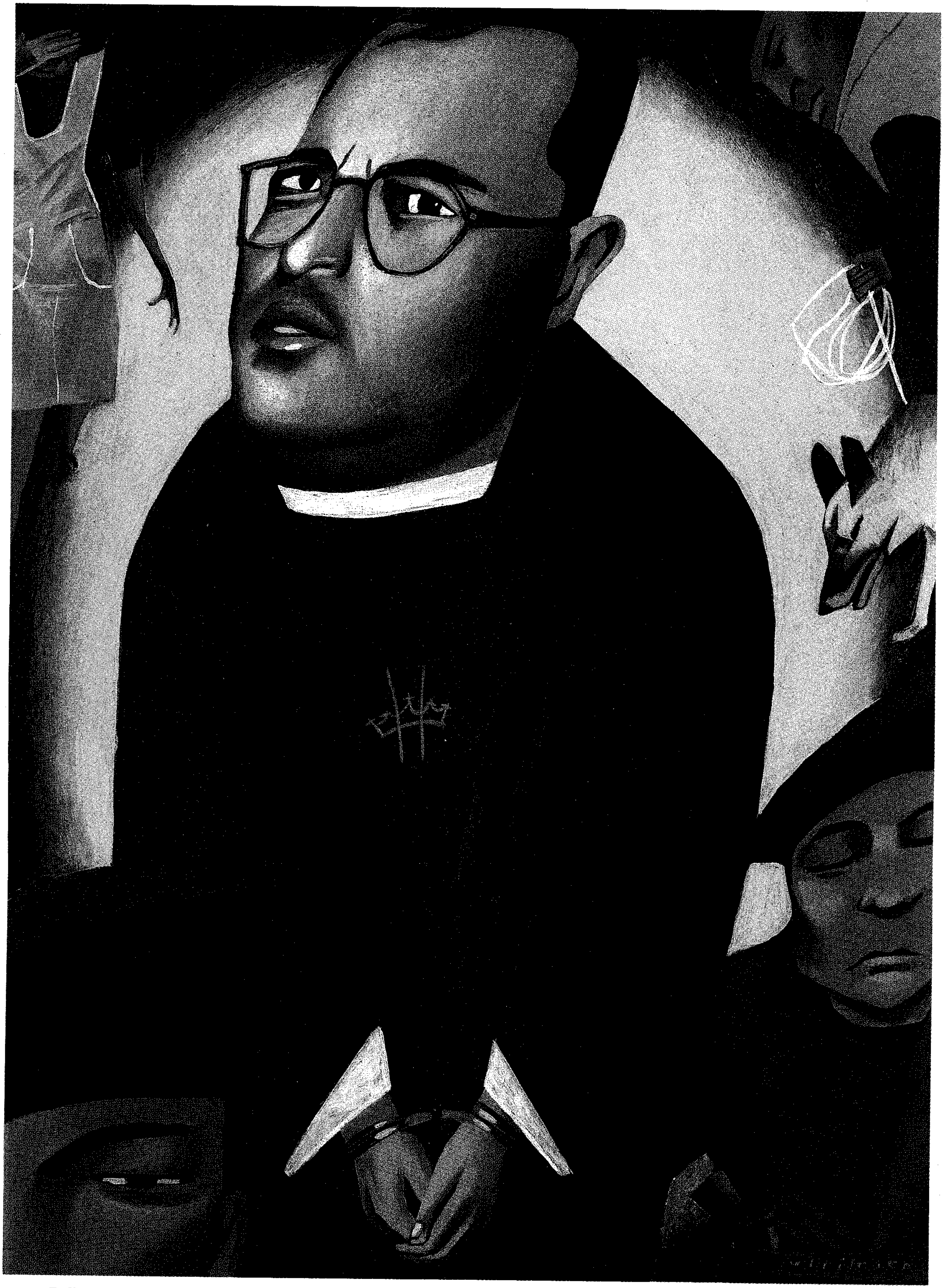


The Victim: Bishop Juan Gerardi.

That last afternoon in the garden of his friend's house, the Bishop was ebullient. The gathering was a celebration, an homage to the completion of "Guatemala: Never Again," a four-volume, fourteen-hundred-page report by the Interdiocesan Recovery of Historical Memory Project, REMHI—an unprecedented investigation into the "disappearances," murders, torture, and systematic violence that had been inflicted on the population of Guatemala since the early nineteen-sixties, when a series of right-wing military dictators ruled the country and waged war against leftist guerrilla groups. That conflict had formally ended in December, 1996, with United Nations-monitored peace accords. The REMHI report identified by name more than fifty-two thousand of the war's estimated two hundred thousand civilian dead and disappeared, documented four hundred and twenty-two massacres, and found that the Guatemalan Army and associated paramilitary groups were responsible for ninety per cent of the crimes and that a little under five per cent of the killing had been done by guerrilla factions. The report was detailed and thorough. A chapter even laid out the structure and functions of the military's various intelligence units, one of which was devoted solely to sexual spying.

As a condition of the peace accords, the Army and the guerrillas had been granted a general amnesty from prosecution for war-related crimes. This incensed human-rights activists, for whom amnesty seemed tantamount to a coverup. Bishop Gerardi had set up REMHI, in 1994, partly because he doubted that a truth commission backed by the United Nations would be tough enough on the Army. In fact, when the truth-commission report was finally published, two weeks ago, it went even farther than REMHI had gone, charging the Army with genocide. This opened up the possibility of indictments against individual officers, since the amnesty did not cover crimes against humanity. But last April the REMHI report was the

ILLUSTRATIONS BY MARK ULRIKSEN



Police arrested Father Mario Orantes, the Bishop's housemate, for the murder. His dog and the cook were also taken in.

most shocking public indictment of war crimes that had ever been made in Guatemala.

THE GREEN PIANO

Aeolian. Gratis. Great thunderer, half-ton infant of miracles
Torn free of charge from the universe by my mother's will.
You must have amazed that half-respectable street

Of triple-decker families and rooming-house housepainters
The day that the bole-ankled oversized hams of your legs
Bobbed in procession up the crazy-paved front walk

Embraced by the arms of Mr. Poppik the seltzer man
And Corydon his black-skinned helper, tendering your thighs
Thick as a man up our steps. We are not reptiles:

Even the male body bears nipples, as if to remind us
We are designed for dependence and nutriment, past
Into future. O Europe, they budged your case, its ponderous

Guts of iron and brass, ten kinds of hardwood and felt
Up those heel-pocked risers and treads splintering tinder.
Angelic nurse of clamor, yearner, tinkler, dominator—

O Elephant, you were for me! When the tuner Mr. Otto Van Brunt
Pronounced you excellent despite the cracked sounding board, we
Obeyed him and swabbed your ivories with hydrogen peroxide.

You blocked a doorway and filled most of the living room.

AFTER the celebration for REMHI in the back yard broke up on the afternoon of April 26th, a Sunday, Ronalth Ochaeta, the thirty-four-year-old executive director of ODHA, drove Bishop Gerardi to his home at the church of San Sebastián, an old parish in the center of the city. Almost immediately, without even changing his clothes—jeans, a checked cotton shirt, and a beige windbreaker—the Bishop went out again. He had asked the vice-parish priest, Father Mario, to substitute for him at the six-o'clock Mass, since he was having his customary Sunday-evening meal with his sister at their nephew's house. At approximately five minutes to ten, Bishop Gerardi returned from dinner and drove his car into the parish-house garage.

On any given night, as many as a dozen homeless men and an occasional woman would take shelter in a covered walkway that runs alongside the parish house and the garage. Like Guatemala's narco-traffickers, members of kidnapping and carjacking gangs, and sports heroes, the vagrants had nicknames: Carne Asada (Grilled Meat), Chalupa (Lollipop), El Gallo (Rooster). This is how they were known among themselves and to the police, although everybody else referred to them, and to such vagrants in general, as *bolitos*, little drunks. "My *bolitos*," Bishop Gerardi used to say, and they in turn called him El Jefe. The homeless men were also called *charamileros*, a term drawn from the word for the pharmaceutical alcohol most of them drink, speeding them toward death.

That evening, two *bolitos*—El Colocho (Curly) and El Chino Iván—were in a small liquor-and-grocery store around the corner from the church, drinking beer and watching the movie "Congo" on television. When "Congo" ended, at about ten o'clock, El Colocho and El Chino Iván left the store and headed across the street, into a park that fronts the church complex. El Chino Iván realized that he'd forgotten his cigarettes and turned back to get them, and El Colocho went on alone. As he approached the parish house through the trees, he heard the metal door of the garage scrape open, and saw a man in his twenties step out. The man was of medium height and well built, but the most striking thing about him was that he was naked from the waist up. Guatemala City is a mountain-plateau city, and the nights can be chilly: people don't go around shirtless, as they might in the hot lowlands and on the coasts.

El Colocho knew that Father Mario didn't drive but that Bishop Gerardi had two cars, a VW Golf and a Toyota jeep, and that when he went in and out of the garage one of the vagrants would sometimes help him shut the cumbersome garage door. El Colocho asked the half-naked man if a car was about to come out, and he answered softly, "*Simón, ese*"—"Yeah, man." At that moment, a police patrol car drove down Sixth Avenue, past the park in front of the church, and the man stood frozen in the dark, watching. Then he turned and pulled the garage door shut and took off running toward Seventh Avenue, behind the church.

About five minutes later, El Colocho saw the stranger walk back into the park, buttoning a white shirt. This was when El Chino Iván, arriving on the scene with his recovered cigarettes, encountered the stranger. According to El Chino Iván, the stranger approached him and said, "*Compadre*, sell me a cigarette." El Chino Iván handed him two cigarettes, and the stranger handed him a one-quetzal bill, worth about fifteen cents (El Chino Iván later turned it over to the police), and said, "*Buena onda*, *gracias*"—"Cool, thanks." Then he left again, this time heading down Sixth Avenue, in the direction of the National Palace, just a few blocks away.

El Colocho and El Chino Iván lay down alongside the other *bolitos* to sleep. At about half past midnight, the parish-house door to the right of the garage suddenly opened and Father Mario stepped out in his bathrobe and pajamas. According to El Colocho, the priest asked if anyone had gone in or out. El Colocho told him that he'd seen a man who was naked from the waist up come out of the garage. He recalled later that the priest responded, "Ah, then stay here, because I've phoned the

The sofa and chairs dwindled to a ram and ewes, cowering: now,
The colored neighbors could be positive we were crazy and rich,

As we thought the people were who gave you away for the moving
Out of their carriage house—they had painted you the color of pea soup.
The drunk man my mother hired never finished antiquing you

Ivory and umber, so you stood half done, a throbbing mistreated noble,
Genuine—my mother's swollen livestock of love, lost one, unmastered:
You were the beast she led to the shrine of my genius, mistaken.

Endlessly I bonged according to my own chord system "Humoresque,"
"The Talk of the Town," "What'd I Say." Then one day they painted you pink.
Pink is how my sister remembers you the Saturday afternoon

When our mother fell on her head, dusty pink as I turn on the bench
In my sister's memory to see our mother carried moaning up the last
Steps and into the living room, inaugurating the reign of our confusion.

They sued the builder of the house she fell in, with the settlement
They bought a house at last and one day when I came home from college
You were gone, mahogany breast, who nursed me through those

Years of the Concussion, and there was a crappy little Baldwin Acrosonic
In your place, gleaming, walnut shell. You were gone, despoiled one—
Pink one, forever green one, white-and-gold one, comforter, living soul.

—Robert Pinsky

police." He remembered that Father Mario seemed nervous. In a statement to the police later that night, Father Mario said that the *bolitos* had told him that they had seen nothing unusual. In two subsequent declarations to investigators, however, his account coincided with El Colocho's.

Father Mario told investigators that he had spent Sunday afternoon in his bedroom, watching television and dining on his favorite food, fried chicken delivered from Pollo Campero, a popular takeout restaurant. After the evening Mass, he took his eleven-year-old German shepherd, Baloo, for a brief walk. He changed into his pajamas at his usual hour, around seven-thirty, and went to the parish-house kitchen to take medicine for a severe migraine condition. In the kitchen, he spoke briefly to the parish cook, Margarita López, and to the sacristan, Antonio Izaguirre, who were having dinner. After finishing their meal, the cook, who had a bad chest cold, retired to her room, and the sacristan went home. Father Mario fed Baloo, washed up, sat down at his computer, and logged onto the Internet. Later, he said, he turned on his air-conditioner and watched television in bed until about ten-twenty, when he dozed off. He awoke half an hour later, turned off the television, and went back to sleep.

At around midnight, Father Mario stated, he turned over in bed and was awakened, because a light outside his room was shining through the glass pane over the door. The light was usually turned off at that hour. He got up and went outside, leaving Baloo behind. There were other lights on and doors were ajar along a corridor that runs the length of the house, from the bedrooms of Father Mario and the Bishop, past two small patios, the kitchen, and the cook's bedroom, directly into the garage, which is an open area at the end of the house nearest to the church. The corridor is about thirty feet long. Father Mario found the Bishop lying in a pool of blood beside his Toyota jeep. His legs were crossed at the ankles and his hands were crossed at the wrists and lying on his chest. A bloodstained triangular chunk of concrete paving stone was on the floor near the body, not far from a blue sweater.

At about 1 A.M., Fernando Penados, the Archbishop's nephew, was awakened by his father, who told him that Bishop Gerardi had been murdered. The Bishop was Penados's mentor. Penados had gone to work for him at ODHA in 1990, when he was only twenty years old. Bishop Gerardi frequently took trips abroad to represent ODHA in various international forums, and Penados occasionally accompanied him. He'd known the Bishop since he was a child, and the two men became closer on these trips, especially on the long flights to Europe. "They were a part of my formation, those ten hours in the air," he says. He and the Bishop would talk and sip *whiskitos*. Penados worked on some of Guatemala's most notorious and labyrinthine human-rights cases, including the murder of a young anthropologist, Myrna Mack Chang, who was stabbed twenty-seven times on a street in downtown Guatemala City by a man who turned out to belong to a covert military-intelligence unit. Penados took courses in criminology sponsored by the F.B.I. and by the French and Spanish governments, and then, three years ago, when he was twenty-six, he left ODHA to take a job as subdirector of investigations in the Public Ministry, the Guatemalan prosecutors' office, a job from which he soon resigned, because, as he says, "there were too many criminals working there." He was teaching at the National Police Academy last spring when Bishop Gerardi was murdered.

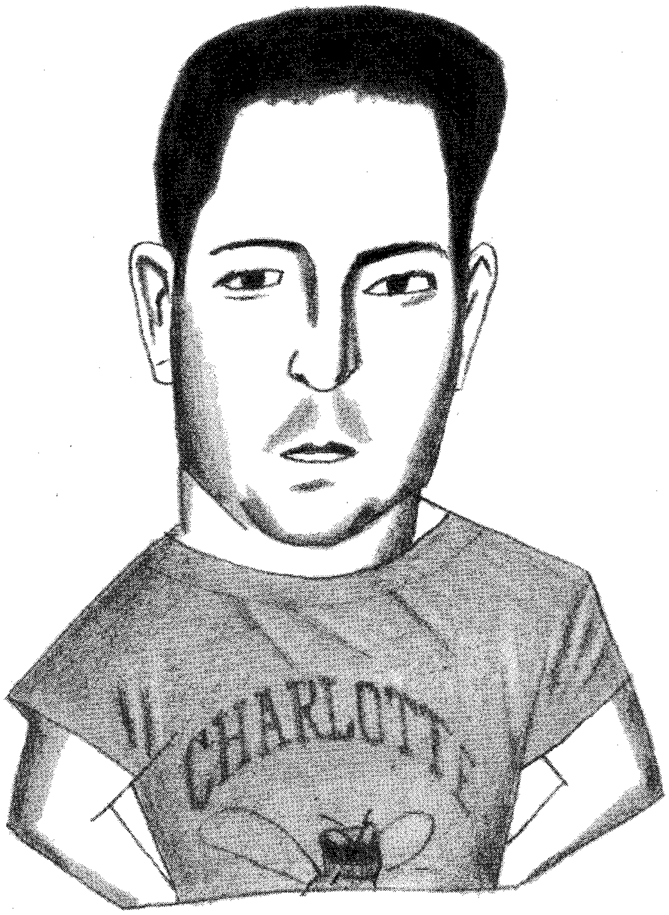
Fernando Penados got to the church at about one-twenty-five. Monseñor Efraín Hernández, the Chancellor of the Curia and the first person Father Mario Orantes had telephoned, was already there, as were police and firemen, although no security cordon had been drawn around the crime scene. The Bishop's body was covered with a sheet and people were walking around it. People were also walking in and out of the parish house.

Penados shouted that the area needed to be sealed off, and he called the Chief Prosecutor. The police established a secure area around the body with a polyester ribbon, but the area was only a few feet wide, and a significant piece of evidence was left outside its perimeter: a bloody footprint made by a small, narrow shoe. (A videotape made by firemen who arrived ahead of the police—in Guatemala, firemen transport bodies to the morgue—shows that the footprint was there from the start.) Penados, who was furious at what seemed to him gross mishandling of the situation, ordered the cordon made wider, but the police moved it back again. "Of course, later they made it much bigger, but by then the crime scene was totally contaminated," he says.

At some point in the chaos of that night, Penados and some of his friends from ODHA decided to form a team to investigate the murder. It was immediately assumed by people close to Bishop Gerardi that the official investigation conducted by the government would be biased, and would quite possibly not go after the most obvious suspects, the people in the Army who were threatened by the REMHI report.

At least three witnesses had seen the probable murderer, the half-naked man who must have left his sweater on the floor of the garage near the Bishop's body. El Colocho told the police that the stranger wore blue-jeans and black boots with yellow soles—Caterpillar-brand boots—and that he had brown skin, a round face, big eyes, a wide mouth, a small mustache and light beard, and curly hair, cut short, "military style." When challenged by his interrogator about the haircut, El Colocho insisted that he'd spent thirty months in the Army and could recognize a military cut when he saw one. El Chino Iván mentioned that earlier in the evening someone had left the *bolitos* three litre bottles of uncapped beer, and bread-and-Kraft-cheese sandwiches, "not the normal thing." Several *bolitos* would claim that the beer had been spiked, because they quickly became drowsy and fell into a heavy sleep, which is why none of them heard or saw anything that happened in the garage.

The third witness was a taxi-driver who saw a white Toyota Corolla parked across from the church a little before ten-thirty. A man with a military-style haircut who was naked from the waist up was standing next to it, talking to the driver, and the taxi-driver took note of the car's license-plate number. Moments later, another car, a gold-colored Toyota Corolla without any license plate at all, suddenly appeared and sped past him. The taxi-driver's story emerged on April 29th, three days after the murder, when ODHA lawyers working on the case heard that a priest had something interesting to report. The taxi-driver, who was distraught and terrified, had gone to see the priest because the story of what El Colocho and El Chino Iván had witnessed was all over the news. He gave the priest the license-plate number, P-3201, and left. Perhaps he hadn't given his name, or perhaps the priest, startled and himself frightened by the visit, hadn't registered it. In any case, the priest didn't know who the taxi-driver was.



The Investigator: Fernando Penados and his team, the Untouchables, pursued leads the government wouldn't go near.

"Why does a person passing in a taxi memorize a license-plate number?" Fernando Penados asked rhetorically. "First, the hour. And second, because this person is no tame dove. The taxi-driver notices these things because he has his past." The taxi-driver had told the priest that he'd once been imprisoned on a drug charge. Penados said that someone with that kind of experience tends to notice the same things that a policeman does. If someone wearing no shirt is standing by a car on a dark street late at night, that sort of person will memorize a license-plate number.

Fernando Penados has a crewcut, and he wears dark sunglasses and T-shirts that show off a weight lifter's biceps. He swaggers a bit and looks forbiddingly tough, although his good-natured charm soon breaks through. The team of investigators that he put together at ODHA was called, half-jokingly, Los Intocables, the Untouchables, which accurately evoked their spirit of adventure while poking a little ironic fun at their ambition. There were three Intocables besides Penados. Two of them, Arturo Rodas and Arturo Aguilar, are huge young men in their twenties. Rodas dresses conservatively, but Aguilar, who loves to read poetry and philosophy, wears an earring, fashionably close-cropped hair, and baggy grunge attire. Sitting side by side in the front seat of their little Suzuki Samurai jeep, they looked like a pair of Babar detectives. The third Intocable, Rodrigo Salvadó, is a tall, skinny, ponytailed anthropology student. At first, Penados perceived the mission of the Intocables as a sort of counter-investigation to that of the Public Ministry. They would collect information that could be used to assess the government prosecutor's claims. But, with time, Penados realized that instead of playing a merely defensive role the Intocables might be able to advance a case against the true killers. A lot of information flowed through ODHA.

Penados and the Intocables traced the license-plate number memorized by the taxi-driver to a vehicle that had once been attached to the Chiquimula military base. The base had been closed the year before, and the vehicle—a pickup truck—was now registered to the Army High Command in Guatemala City. The Ministry of Defense issued a statement explaining that the pickup had been sold, and that the Army did not have the plates. It soon came out, however, that the vehicle had been sold without its plates. Later, it was discovered that one of the two plates numbered P-3201, which should have been in the Army High Command's possession, was missing.

Very early in the investigation into Bishop Gerardi's murder, Church officials began receiving anonymous tips that two Army officers, Colonel Byron Disraeli Lima Estrada, and his son, Captain Byron Lima Oliva, were involved, and that the murder had been a political assassination. Some of the information seemed to be coming from within the military itself, suggesting that not all members of the Army approved of the Limas' operation, which was said to have been very well organized, and had involved stakeouts and methods for "controlling" the *bolitos* and others in the park outside the church. When ODHA brought its information about the Limas to a commission set up by the President of Guatemala, Alvaro Arzú, to study the murder, they were told by a Presidential aide that the commission wanted nothing to do with this avenue of investigation. "You know we can't investigate the President's security," the aide said, "for reasons of governability."

Colonel Lima had commanded the Chiquimula military base. He was a former head of the Army's internal intelligence unit, the notorious G-2, which was responsible for most of the political disappearances in the nineteen-eighties. Colonel Lima was now retired. He was part of a group of retired officers who met regularly with General Marco Tulio Espinosa, the head of the Presidential general staff, the E.M.P., to discuss their concerns about how the peace accords, and, more particularly, the allegations made by human-rights activists, would affect the officers who had fought in the civil war. The E.M.P., which is nominally in charge of Presidential security, is to a degree autonomous. Over the years, the E.M.P.'s covert-intelligence units, including one known as the Archive, have been responsible for many disappearances and assassinations. (Myrna Mack Chang's killer, Sergeant Major Noel de Jesús Beteta, took his orders from a murky intelligence unit at the E.M.P.) Captain Lima, the Colonel's son, belonged to a covert "anti-kidnapping" unit of the E.M.P.

Immigration records show that Captain Lima flew into Guatemala from Miami at noon on April 26th, the day of the murder. During a brief interrogation by Public Ministry investigators, he said that he had been at a bar called the Sports Grill until eleven-thirty that night. He said he had gone directly from the bar to E.M.P. headquarters, but a check of credit-card receipts showed that he had paid his bill at eight-thirty. The captain then switched his story, claiming to have eaten cake with another soldier at E.M.P. headquarters at eleven. Lima said that he had not learned of Bishop Gerardi's murder until he read about it the next day in the newspapers, although that seems unlikely, since E.M.P. headquarters is only a block from the church, and the murder of the Bishop would have been of particular interest to the Army officers there. The night of the murder, a pair of E.M.P. intelligence agents who had no official reason to be at the crime scene, and whose presence there the Army has officially denied, turned up at the church with a video camera.

In August, a newspaper reported that the phone company had records of a call that was made from the San Sebastián parish house to a pay phone outside a military academy in San Marcos the night of the murder. The day after the story was published, the phone itself vanished, torn from its post.

THE murder of Bishop Gerardi was immediately, and almost unanimously, assumed to have been committed by the military in retaliation for the REMHI report. Local and foreign newspapers quoted politicians and religious and human-rights leaders all around the world who denounced it as a political crime. Some of them went so far as to say that the peace process in Guatemala would be "dead" or at least "seriously imperilled" if the killers were not swiftly brought to justice. In the past decade, military-intelligence units that previously had been supported by the C.I.A. and given carte blanche to murder opponents of the established order had increasingly turned their expertise to crime and the preservation of power. Now, in perhaps their most audacious strike ever, they had murdered a bishop!

But a different spin could be put on the crime, a version that shifted responsibility from the Army to the Church, and it was this version that quickly made its way from the highest levels of the Guatemalan government and military to the public. In this version, the murder was a crime of passion, *un lío de homosexuales*, which is how, according to reliable witnesses, it was described by General Espinosa, the head of the E.M.P., in a cabinet meeting the day after the murder. And that rumor was passed by President Arzú, government ministers, and military officers to influential businessmen and through diplomatic back channels.

The "homosexual crime of passion" rumor became public in late June. Fernando Linares Beltranena, a conservative columnist at the nation's most widely read newspaper, *Prensa Libre*, was one of the first to pick up on the story. Linares wrote a column that amounted to a disingenuous smear of Bishop Gerardi. "Is it defamatory to qualify Gerardi as a presumed homosexual?" he asked. "How do the homosexuals feel, whether confessed or in the closet, that their life style should publicly be called an insult or a dishonor? If there was a pro-gay association in Guatemala, they would have protested by now, like the American group defending Versace, recently killed in Miami. It's true that priests take a vow of chastity, but not of castration, and their natural sexual impulse stays alive. . . . The dishonor to Gerardi is his cruel and vile assassination, not the suggestion of his presumably practicing a certain life style."

A month later, on July 22nd, a detachment of some seventy special-forces policemen in black berets, armed with automatic rifles and bulletproof vests, surrounded San Sebastián. Father Mario, who was having lunch at his parents' house, was summoned back to the church, where he was arrested for the murder of

Bishop Gerardi and led away, weeping, in handcuffs. He was followed by Margarita López, the parish-house cook, who was sobbing loudly and wailing. She had been arrested for destroying and concealing evidence, mainly because, on Father Mario's orders, she had mopped up the crime scene, all that blood, shortly after the Bishop's body was removed to the morgue. Also taken in that day, as material evidence, was Baloo, Father Mario's German shepherd. The arrest had been precipitated by the news that a forensic anthropologist in Madrid had studied autopsy photographs of Bishop Gerardi's head and hand and had found marks that he said could have been made only by a dog's bite.

Father Mario is a tall, pudgy, well-groomed man who seems somewhat neurasthenic. He is now thirty-six, and was thus a relatively young priest in a quiet, genteel parish usually reserved for bishops with overloaded schedules, like Bishop Gerardi, and old priests on the verge of retirement. His duties were light. He shared four daily Masses, six on Wednesdays, with the Bishop. His salary was five hundred quetzales—about seventy-four dollars—a month, plus fourteen quetzales for each Mass. The first Saturday of every month he made the rounds of the neighborhood to take confession from parishioners who were too old or too infirm to come to church. He was said to have a sympathetic bedside manner with the gravely ill.

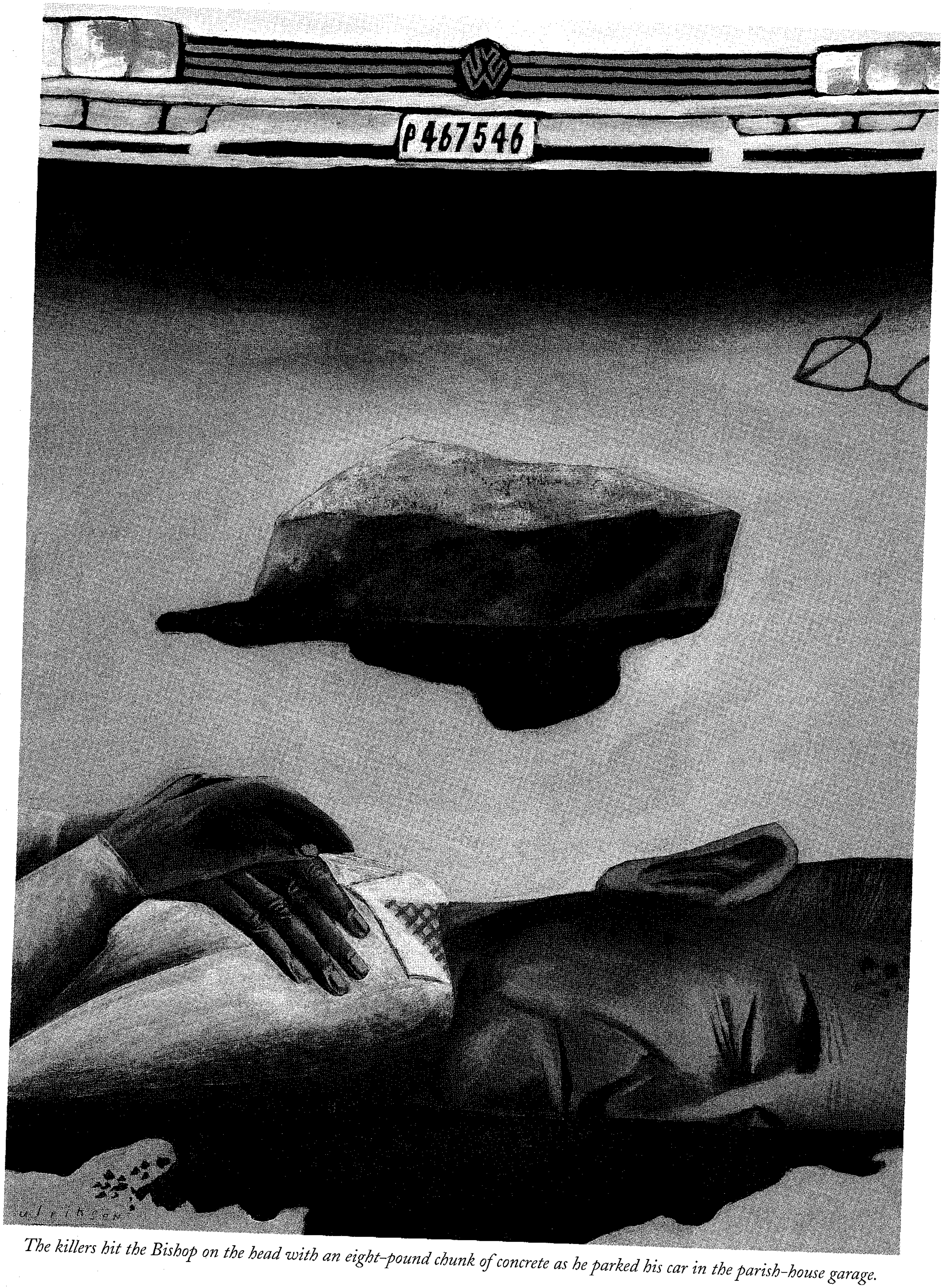
The sacristan at San Sebastián told me that Father Mario rarely left his bedroom, and spent much of his time talking on the telephone. His relationship with Bishop Gerardi has been described by some as friendly enough, though a bit perfunctory, and by others, including the Bishop's relatives, as warmly affectionate. They add that Father Mario liked searching the Internet for obscure theological texts that he knew would delight his superior. His bad health—severe migraines, asthma, colitis, ulcers—is the usual explanation for his assignment to San Sebastián, along with his intimacy with Monseñor Hernández, the Chancellor of the Curia, who had been his parish priest and was like a second father to Mario and his older brother, Sergio, who also became a priest. Father Mario had studied at the Liceo Javier, a prestigious school run by Jesuits, with mainly middle- and upper-middle-class students. The school was a breeding ground for young political activists and radicals in the seventies and eighties, although Father Mario became a seminarian in the conservative Salesian order. His family is connected to the conservative wing of the Church. His mother is the niece of Archbishop Mariano Rossell y Arellano, an aggressive anti-Communist who collaborated with the C.I.A. in the year leading up to the coup of 1954, which overthrew the democratically elected reformist government of Colonel Jacobo Arbenz. An old schoolmate recalls that Mario's brother, Sergio, was nicknamed El Nazi, because of his authoritarian personality and his love of all things military.

Father Mario seems poignantly unsuited for the austere demands of the priesthood. There is a babyishness to his speech, including an overuse, even by Guatemalan standards, of diminutives; in each of his transcribed declarations he uses the verb *empijamar*—to put on one's pajamas—almost as if he were recalling a tenderness lavished on himself. And the disconcerting accumulation of possessions found in his bedroom is not in keeping with a repudiation of the material world. Father Mario slept in a king-size bed imported from England. Most of the furniture in his room was made of mahogany, including bookshelves holding some six hundred books, mainly theological, and an entertainment unit that supported a thirty-six-inch wide-screen JVC television, a VCR, and a Pioneer laser-disk player. When prosecutors and police searched the room on the day of the arrest, they found approximately ninety videocassettes ("Jurassic Park," "The Godfather," "The Exorcist," boxed collections of "Lethal Weapon," Frankenstein, James Bond, and the Three Stooges, who—according to his mother—are his favorite performers). He had a Macintosh 6500/300 computer, an Epson Stylus 800 color printer, a collection of fifty CD-ROMs, a JVC stereo with four ambient speakers, and approximately two hundred CDs of mainly classical music and Latin romantic pop of the Julio Iglesias variety. He had a reclining armchair, and a computer chair covered in magenta-colored leather. In his closet were sixty-five shirts, most either from Ermenegildo Zegna or custom-made in London; twelve leather jackets, twelve pairs of Italian shoes, twenty pairs of slacks, and fifteen sweaters, all with designer labels; four Dunhill belts; and at least six sets of pajamas. He had three expensive watches, one a gold Cartier. In a drawer in the priest's night table were a Walther .380-calibre pistol and several cartons of bullets, which were described as a gift from his brother, Sergio, and which Father Mario said he had been intending to sell.

Some of the things found in Father Mario's room were reflections of his extraordinary love for Baloo. There was a stuffed felt dog on the striped bedspread, and the bedroom dresser displayed trophies that Baloo had won in dog shows, as well as several framed photographs of the dog. Also found in the room were photographs of Baloo with an erection, or, as Fernando Penados phrased it when describing the discovery to an eminent Church figure, "in his maximum expression."

Baloo, who was born in Germany and cost twenty-five hundred dollars, was a gift to Father Mario from his brother, Father Sergio. For four years, beginning in 1992, Father Sergio held the prestigious post of rector of the Colegio San José de los Infantes. During his tenure, the priest ran up a mostly unaccounted-for debt of four million eight thousand quetzales (then nearly six hundred and fifty thousand dollars). Part of the money was spent on guns: high-calibre Colts, Tauruses, Jerichos. The priest gave guns away, and he sold them. The guns are a problem now, because a number of those bought and registered in the school's name are missing. Bills of sale for other missing weapons have been found as well, along with a cache of guns that were never registered at all. But the guns, and the millions of quetzales in debt, weren't the reason that the young priest was finally dismissed from his post. Father Sergio "was having problems of the Lewinsky sort," said the new rector, José Mariano Carrera. "As I understand it, his being removed was due to denunciations by various female teachers before the ecclesiastical Curia."

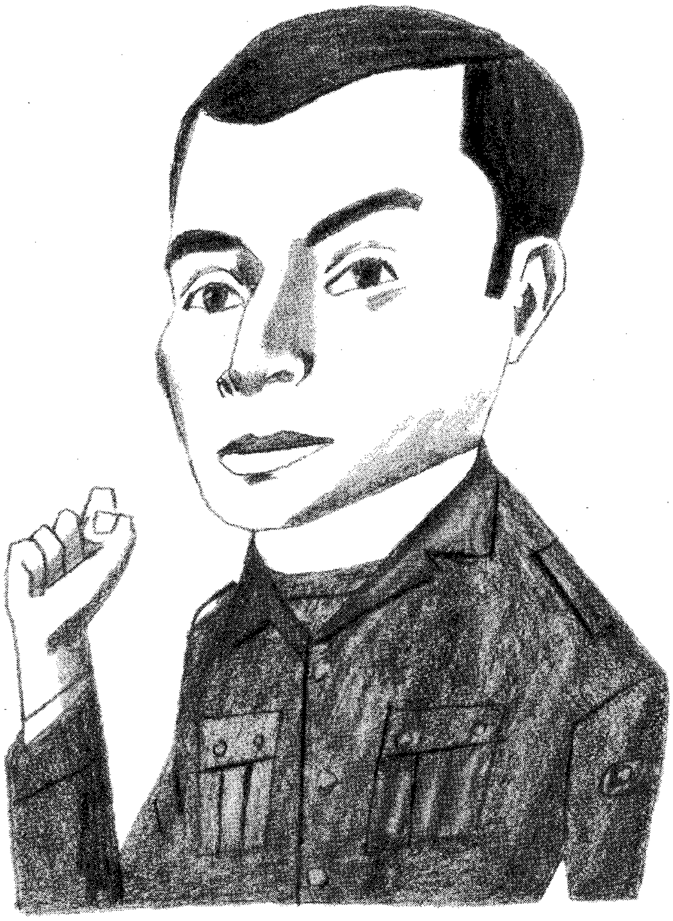
Carrera, who is in his sixties, told me that he'd been looking forward to retiring to a small coffee farm, but after it became clear that Sergio Orantes had



The killers hit the Bishop on the head with an eight-pound chunk of concrete as he parked his car in the parish-house garage.

plunged the venerable school into chaos, Archbishop Penados, an old friend, asked him to take over. So far, only a million quetzales of the debt has been paid off. Now the school's accounts are overseen by a board, but when Sergio was there he could write checks drawing on the school's accounts whenever, and for whatever, he wished, with no oversight. "Sergio was loved here," Carrera said. "Before he left, he gave away four pistols to his friends at the school. And, of course, dogs." (Sergio bred German shepherds at the school.) The new rector discovered a bank account from the Popular Bank of Florida in the name of both Orantes brothers.

Father Mario travelled to Houston twice a year to receive medical treatment. Carrera told me that Baloo also went to Houston. "I know that the dog travelled to the United States one time," he said. "It was paid for with this school's money. Sergio took the dog to Houston on a plane, so that his brother wouldn't be sad." In Houston, Father Mario stayed in an apartment owned by his wealthy "ordination godmother," Martha Jane Melville Novella, an unmarried woman in late middle age who belongs to the family that owns Guatemala's cement monopoly. Melville Novella is known both for her beauty and for her financial generosity to conservative Catholics. She is a likely source—Sergio's bank accounts are another—for many of the expensive items found in Father Mario's bedroom.



The Army: Anonymous tips to investigators cast suspicion on Captain Lima, who belonged to a covert military unit.

Monseñor Hernández, the Chancellor of the Curia—a highly placed power broker in the Church, the man to see if you needed to have a bureaucratic snag resolved (and the first person Father Mario called the night of the murder)—had arranged for Father Sergio to be transferred to another parish, with a certificate stating that he had run the Colegio San José de los Infantes, despite the unaccounted-for millions of quetzales in debt, responsibly and honestly. "Monseñor Hernández is like Richelieu," Carrera said. "He's in charge of the ecclesiastical government's business." He paused a moment and reflected on the ethical dilemma he was presenting. "What seemed so strange to me is that, well, these are priests. One has to have confidence in their sanctity. If Hernández knew about what Sergio was doing, he should have told the other bishops. Archbishop Penados should be able to believe in his priests." Carrera paused again. "The Archbishop is very tired. I feel bad for him. The man he most trusted was Gerardi. His absence has been very painful to him . . . with good reason." Shortly after Sergio's problems at the school became known, he left Guatemala. At the time of the murder, he was a Jesuit novitiate at a seminary in Panama. "Who knows if they'll graduate or expel him?" Carrera said when I asked how the recent exposure in the press of Sergio's past had affected his status. "You know how the Jesuits are. And Sergio is very intelligent." (Sergio Orantes, whom I was unable to locate, has left the seminary.)

Fernando Penados knew from experience that investigating the murder of a priest is a delicate matter. Priests are expected to live purer lives than other people, and whenever evidence to the contrary turns up it is assumed that "disappointing" personal behavior must have had something to do with the crime. The Bishop Gerardi murder investigation, Penados knew, wasn't going to be an exception. The investigation of the murder on behalf of the Church was exposing elements of the lives of some of the clergy that were not very attractive, to say the least. "Our responsibility was to get the facts, but we were worried about what position the bishops would take when confronted with them," Penados told me. Nevertheless, when Penados warned Bishop Ríos Montt, Gerardi's successor at ODHA, that a full investigation into the murder meant opening the Church to further embarrassment and scandal, "Monseñor Ríos said, 'If we have to purify the Church in order to get to the bottom of this crime, then we'll purify the Church.' "

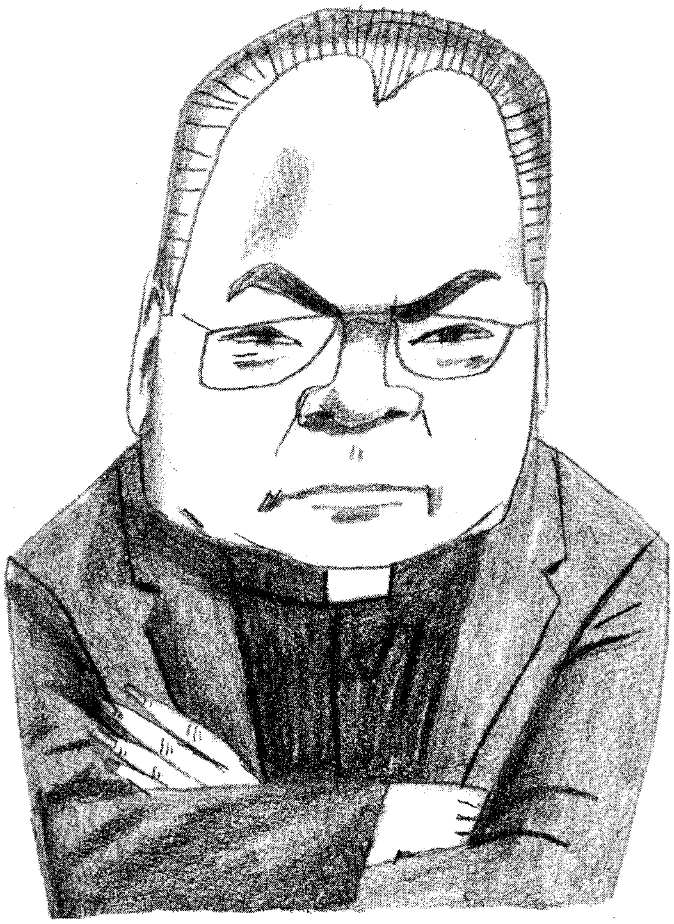
ONE morning, Ronalth Ochaeta, the executive director of ODHA, showed me around the crime scene. Ochaeta is short, trim, curly-haired, and brown, with classic Mayan-mestizo features. He is emotionally intense and serious-seeming, and people are often intimidated by him. Ochaeta created a controversy in July, following the arrest of Father Mario, when he was quoted as saying, "From the time of Jesus, the Church has always had its Judases." Ever since, Church spokesmen had been vehemently and ostentatiously declaring their belief in Father Mario's innocence. Nevertheless, Ochaeta says, he doesn't regret his "Judas" statement. "I believe that Mario knows more," he said. "Of that I am sure."

Bishop Gerardi died about twenty feet inside the garage door, next to his

Toyota jeep, which was parked in front of the VW Golf that he had used the night of the murder. Ochaeta showed me a spot near the VW where there had been a large pool of blood. A smaller pool had formed next to the Toyota, around the Bishop's head, and there were double streaks of blood smeared from the larger pool toward the smaller pool, indicating that the bishop's body had been dragged about twelve feet. Ochaeta speculated that the double streaks were made by the Bishop's buttocks dragging along the floor while his body—which was very bulky—was hoisted by two people, one holding him under the arms, the other by the legs. Ochaeta's theory is that the killers were worried that the blood might seep outside, under the doors, to where the *bolitos* were sleeping. The prosecutors have argued that the blood streaks were made with a mop in an attempt to plant misleading evidence. They contended that Bishop Gerardi was murdered in or just outside Father Mario's bedroom—that the Bishop had stumbled on something that Father Mario didn't want his superior to see.

Ochaeta told me that the Bishop's glasses, missing a lens, were found on the floor near the driver's-seat door of the VW. The lens had fallen into the pocket inside the door, indicating that Bishop Gerardi might have received the first blow to his head as he was getting out of his car. The eight-pound, triangular, blood-stained concrete-and-gravel chunk of paving stone was found lying about five feet from the same car door. The sweater left on the floor was closer to the front of the garage. Blood was splattered on the right rear tire of the Toyota and on the floor around the tire, indicating that the Bishop received the final blows to the head there.

The small, narrow footprint had been found not far from the body, pointing toward the rear of the garage. Ochaeta thought that the footprint belonged to the same person who had left traces of blood (surely Bishop Gerardi's blood) on the steps leading to a corridor that connects the garage to the church, and streaks of blood on the wall of the corridor. The footprint is important because it doesn't match the footprint of any obvious suspect, nor could it have been left by the shirtless man, who had been described by the *bolitos* as having worn Caterpillar boots, which would have left a bigger print. The footprint is a key piece of evidence in support of one of the few theories on which both the prosecutors and ODHA agree: that there was more than one perpetrator. Ochaeta thinks that one of the killers was inside the parish house, waiting, and that another was hiding among the *bolitos* and followed the Bishop's car inside. One was the man who left his bloody sweater in the garage and ran into El Colocho as he was leaving; the other killer could have fled into the church and out through any number of exits. But for that to be true someone had to have unlocked the door into the sacristy. There were traces of blood in Father Mario's room and in various corners of the house, some of it, according to prosecutors, tracked by the dog on the night of the murder. The priest insisted that he had been careful not to get any blood on his shoes, although it seems likely that he could have accidentally done so. And he said that Baloo had been in his bedroom the whole time.



The Church Power Broker: Monseñor Hernández resigned last month, after news reports linked him to suspects in the murder.

Ochaeta and I were interrupted by the arrival of a group of girls from the Sacred Family School. The students came in double file, singing hymns, first graders first, high-schoolers in the rear. They carried candles and colorful homemade paper kites, which are a traditional symbol of communion with the dead in Guatemala. The kites had photographs cut out of newspapers and headlines about Bishop Gerardi and the REMHI report glued to them, and hand-printed messages. The girls laid their kites down in a pile near candles and a vase of flowers that had been placed along the garage wall, and then they went into the church to pray. It was a very moving scene. This is the first generation of Guatemalan children to be taught that it is possible to speak out against state murder.

Several of the kites in the pile next to the flowers were decorated with photographs of the Bishop's funeral Mass. Twenty thousand spectators had watched a procession of priests and nuns follow the coffin around the plaza in front of the Metropolitan Cathedral. One kite was decorated with a photograph of Father Mario, who had been a pallbearer, staring sternly straight ahead as he supported the coffin. I picked up another kite, on which an adult, probably a parent of one of the girls, had written, in crayon, "*Y el sacerdote, qué*?. . ." "And what about the priest? The involvement of Father Mario Orantes should not be disregarded." That kite was decorated with a photograph of Father Mario in custody, slumped in a chair, one hand spread over his forehead and partially shielding his eyes, an image of utter misery.

FOR all the confusion surrounding the case, when people in Guatemala say the murder of Bishop Gerardi was "the perfect crime" they don't mean that they don't think they know who did it. They think the Army did it. But it's much harder to understand why. Edgar Gutiérrez, the executive director of the REMHI project, told me that it had never entered his mind that Bishop Gerardi might be killed, given the risks, and the inevitable outcry and pressure from international groups which would be sure to follow the killing of a figure as prominent as the Bishop. Only later did he realize what "a complex chess move" the murder had been. Gutiérrez is one of the people who refer to the murder as "a masterpiece," "a work of diabolical genius," "perfect."

On its simplest level, the crime can be seen as a response to the REMHI report, which had opened up wounds that were supposed to have been closed by the peace accords. The Army had every reason to want to kill Bishop Gerardi. His murder would be interpreted as a warning, a clear statement that the Army would not tolerate threats to its position in the post-accords democracy. But for the crime to be "perfect" the Army would also have to get away with it officially. And one way to do that would be to disguise it as the consequence of a domestic conflict or a robbery or some such. This strategy had worked in the past. Throughout the nineties, opponents of the government have been killed in faked carjackings or highway robberies, or stabbed to death in bogus crimes of passion. Many such cases have been documented. But precisely because such methods were familiar, in order to really get away with this crime the Army would have to be more inventive. What if a scenario could be created that would seem to implicate the Church itself in the murder, most obviously by making it appear that the domestic relationship between Bishop Gerardi and Father Mario Orantes had somehow resulted in a homosexual crime of passion? That the man with no shirt seen leaving the garage minutes after the murder had been involved in some sexual scenario that had gone awry. That the leader of ODHA was a drunken *hueco*, a fag.

Discrediting the Church, or at any rate the wing of the Church that was attempting to achieve a kind of "justice" beyond that mandated by the peace accords, was compatible with the policies of President Arzú. Presiding over the peace accords is Arzú's proudest achievement. Not the least of the benefits of the accords was the foreign aid that became available once Guatemala cut down on the number of human-rights violations attributed to it. The country has one of the worst human-rights records in Latin America. Nevertheless, "the President's discourse keeps getting harder toward human rights, and closer to the Army," Edgar Gutiérrez said. The human-rights activists' insistence on accountability is seen by Arzú as disruptive of the peace process, and the murder of Bishop Gerardi coincided with a ferocious campaign by the government against human-rights organizations in general and the Catholic Church in particular.

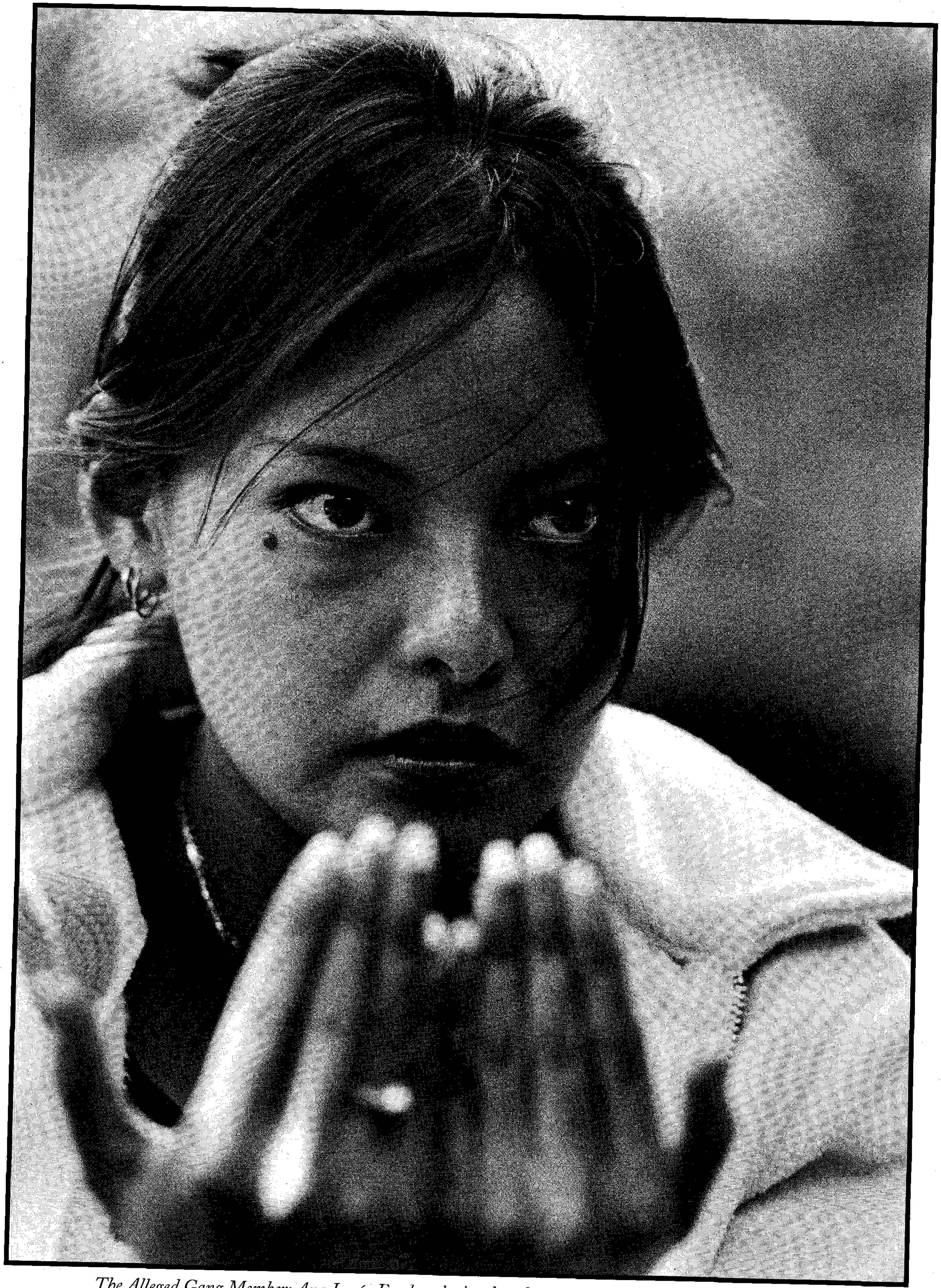
In July, President Arzú received a letter from Walter Kasper, the Bishop of Rottenburg-Stuttgart, in Germany, expressing concern over the human-rights implications of Bishop Gerardi's murder. The letter was not made public, but copies of it, along with a four-page response sent to the Bishop by Arzú on August 21st, have been circulating among Church authorities, diplomats, and organizations affiliated with the peace process. Bishop Kasper wrote, "We can only conquer the future by knowing the past," and Arzú responded, "If we go on living in the past, we lose the future." Work such as that being done by REMHI, he contended, was "an act of political denunciation committed by a sector of the Catholic Church determined to act at the margins of the peace accords." In September, in a speech to graduating military cadets, President Arzú called human-rights activists "nearly traitors to the fatherland."

The subtext of the murder of Bishop Gerardi was that, as much as peace had transformed Guatemala, the fundamental power of the military remained intact. Except that "the perfect crime" had flaws. The murder was not perfect, because of what the taxi-driver saw. The license plate on the car the bare-chested man was standing next to led ODHA to the Army. Also, almost no one took seriously the suggestion that the Bishop was a homosexual. Yet in the long run perhaps those flaws in the perfect crime would be nothing but annoyances for those who planned the Bishop's death.

THE prosecutor assigned to the case, Otto Ardón, had told Ronalth Ochaeta that Father Mario had been arrested simply to force him to talk about what he knew. But then Ardón became obsessed with trying to pin the murder on the priest. To some extent, this must have been simply because he did not want to go after the Limas or any other Army figure. Before coming to the Public Ministry, Ardón worked as a lawyer for the Air Force; he has family ties to the military as well. In 1997, he was removed as the prosecutor in a case involving the massacre of more than three hundred people. Relatives of the deceased had protested that his bias toward the soldiers on trial was blatant and intolerable. Ardón let it be known that he didn't want the Gerardi case, and that he had nothing to gain from prosecuting it. But since it had been assigned to him he had to do something, and he continued tenaciously to pursue the theory that Father Mario was the murderer and Baloo his accomplice.

By September, the attention of most Guatemalans was riveted on the carnivalesque "dog-and-priest show" and the imminent arrival of scientific and legal experts for a dramatic exhumation of the Bishop's corpse. The speculations of Dr. José Manuel Reverte Coma, the Spanish forensic anthropologist who first put forward the theory that the Bishop had been bitten by a dog shortly before, during, or after his murder, were deemed so compelling that a new autopsy was required. All across the country, automobiles sported bumper-stickers reading "Free Baloo!" There was a rumor that the prosecutor and his men had worn the dog out to the point of death trying to train, or retrain, him to respond to attack commands in German, which had been written out phonetically on a sheet of paper found in Father Mario's room. This didn't seem completely far-fetched to Father Mario's cheerful, pie-faced young lawyer, José Toledo. "Sometimes in this life, lawyers use strategies that are not totally moral, and prosecutors are no ex-

MOISES CASTILLO/COURTESY EL PERIODICO



The Alleged Gang Member: Ana Lucía Escobar denies that she was trafficking in stolen Church relics.

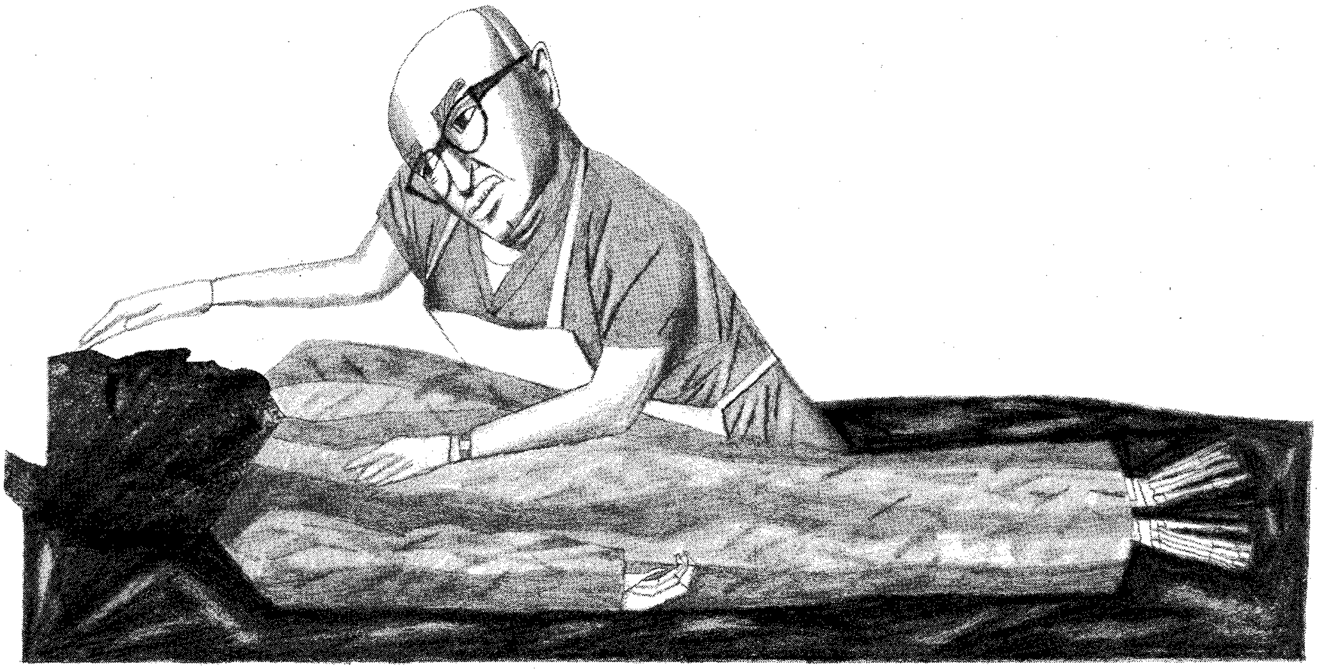
ception," he said to me. "They're convinced that the Padre has information he doesn't want to give. They want to put pressure on the Padre. Maybe he'll get desperate, or bored, and give them something. But he doesn't know anything."

Nobody at ODHA thought that Father Mario was the murderer, or even that he was premeditatively involved. But what if he had been blackmailed or threatened into silence, or both? What if he had seen something, knew something? Someone inside the parish house had to have unlocked the door into the sacristy, allowing one of the killers to flee through the church, and probably into the gold-colored Toyota Corolla that the taxi-driver saw speeding past him that night. Every person at ODHA I spoke to about the case—including Bishop Ríos Montt—was openly skeptical of Father Mario's account of the night of the murder. People also tended not to believe the cook's claims that she didn't see or hear anything. But Father Mario's testimony was particularly garrulous and filled with contradictions and hard-to-credit assertions. His statements struck nearly everybody as strenuous attempts to avoid narrating another version.

Father Mario maintained that when he found the body the face was so smashed up that he didn't recognize the Bishop. But he had lived with him for eight years. And Gerardi had a very distinctive appearance. He was a large, light-skinned man in a country where most men are not. Although the garage is well illuminated, Father Mario told investigators that he had to shine a flashlight on the corpse's face before he recognized it. In later interrogations, he said that not even the flashlight was enough, that it wasn't until he recognized the Bishop's ring on his finger that he knew. In at least two of his declarations, Father Mario clearly indicates that the firemen arrived on the scene first, followed shortly thereafter by Monseñor Hernández, accompanied by two "youths." But in his later statements Father Mario's version coincides with the record, which shows that when the firemen reached the church Monseñor Hernández and the two "youths" were already there. One of the youths was posted by the door and the other was inside, telephoning Church authorities.

What might have happened that night? Did Father Mario let a homosexual lover into his room, and was the lover one of the killers? Did the killers trick Father Mario into collaborating in a less nefarious deed, telling him, for example, that they were just coming in to steal some papers related to REMHI? In conversation with Fernando Penados and Ronalth Ochaeta some years before, Bishop Gerardi had acknowledged hearing stories about Father Mario's being a paid Army informer. He joked that he was better off with Father Mario than without him, because he met his parish duties and could always be counted on to substitute for the Bishop at Mass. As for Father Mario's sexual orientation, there are only rumors. The ODHA investigators knew that within the Church Father Mario was thought to be a homosexual, but when Fernando Penados confronted men who were supposed to have been his lovers they denied any involvement with him.

A FEW nights before the exhumation, I took a taxi to the San Francisco de Asís veterinary clinic, in the furthest industrial outskirts of Guatemala City, in the hopes of being allowed to see Baloo, whose alleged involvement in the crime had brought about his master's arrest. Father Mario's lawyer, José Toledo, had told me that the dog was being kept there. I knocked at the door, a small window slid open, and the night-shift veterinarian's sympathetic face appeared. He said that I couldn't see Baloo—I wasn't even supposed to know Baloo was there. But he agreed to let me come inside to talk about the dog. The veterinarian told me that Baloo had been extremely ill when he arrived at the clinic: he had been in the custody of the Public Ministry, and was dehydrated, neglected, and almost paralyzed in his hindquarters owing to spondylitis, a degenerative, arthritis-like condition of the spinal column, for which he was being treated with regular



The Forensic Anthropologist: Dr. José Reverte Coma's weird theories led to an exhumation of the Bishop's body.

doses of anti-inflammatory medicines. Baloo was doing much better now.

The veterinarian was discreet, but I learned that Baloo shared a patio with other dogs. "Then people who come to visit their dogs, they get to see Baloo?" I inquired. And he said, "Yes, but they don't know they're seeing Baloo." I said, "What if we pretend that I'm just going back there to visit my sick Chihuahua, and you don't have to say anything. I'll just look around and see if I can spot Baloo." The veterinarian thought it over for a moment, and then he said, "*Bien.*" We walked down a corridor, past the one orderly on duty, and, in a rather theatrical voice, the veterinarian began giving me a tour of the clinic, including a stop in the postoperative recovery room (dogs with plastic cones around heads, baleful stares), and then into a darkened patio lined with large cages. Three of the cages had dogs in them, and two of the dogs were German shepherds. I walked up to one German shepherd, cooing, "*Hola*" and "*Buen perro*," and the dog, long, lean, and handsome, jumped up, wagging its tail. I went over to the other cage, where a thick-necked German shepherd sat regally, and this dog bared his fangs and growled so menacingly that I instinctively stepped back. The veterinarian nodded toward the dog and said, "*Perro bravo.*" Mean dog.

We had agreed that he wouldn't identify Baloo. "Which one of those two dogs is older?" I asked, and the veterinarian just laughed.

Mean Baloo or nice Baloo? Had Baloo indeed bitten the prelate on his head and on his thumb, as the Spanish forensic expert and government prosecutors were claiming? During those days in September leading up to Bishop Gerardi's exhumation, not only the issue of Father Mario Orantes's freedom but the course and character of the entire Guatemalan peace process seemed to depend on the answer.

EXPERTS from the United States who attended the exhumation on ODHA's behalf, on September 17th, were confronted with a credentialling process that was hopelessly convoluted and barred them from doing anything but observing. The prosecution's Spanish expert, Dr. Reverte Coma, had already been given credentials that permitted him to participate in the autopsy. Ronalth Ochaeta fumed, "Those shits had this cake already baked." I'd spent the day before the exhumation in the ODHA offices, watching the lawyers work the phones, or try to. ODHA's telephones are thoroughly tapped and are subject to sudden storms of static and constant disconnections. People there are always slamming down receivers and muttering, "*Puta*, they kidnapped the call."

ODHA's consultants were Norman Sperber, the chief forensic dentist for San Diego and Imperial Counties in California, an expert witness in such cases as those of Jeffrey Dahmer and Ted Bundy; Jack Palladino, a private investigator and lawyer in San Francisco whose client list includes President Clinton and Suge Knight, of Death Row Records; and Robert Bux, the deputy chief medical examiner of Bexar County, Texas, a veteran of mass-grave exhumations in Bosnia and the author of "Death Due to Attack from Chow Dog," published in the December, 1992, issue of the *American Journal of Forensic Medicine and Pathology*. At dawn on the day of the exhumation, they were joined in the courtyard of the Metropolitan Cathedral by bishops in dark suits, Public Ministry prosecutors, lawyers, Guatemalan forensics specialists, U.N. observers, and even the mortician who had originally embalmed the Bishop. Led by Bishop Ríos Montt, the assembly filed through a door into the Cathedral, passed behind the nave into a sacristy corridor and down a stairway into another courtyard, then went through a door into the subterranean crypts. Some of those in attendance put on surgical masks. Dr. Reverte Coma, who is seventy-six, was given a chair. Everyone else stood for fifteen minutes while two masons with hammers and chisels worked through the whitewashed plaster and crumbling red brick of the crypt wall. Then the long red-lacquered coffin was pulled out, placed on a stand, and wiped off with a cloth. The lid was opened, and Bishop Ríos Montt said an Our Father.

Later that day, during the examination of the cadaver, the Americans were able to confirm much that the original autopsy had already revealed: the cause of death was blunt trauma wounds to the head, some of which had been inflicted by an object consistent with the chunk of concrete paving stone. But they also found that a fracture across the bridge of the Bishop's nose had been caused by a hard, cylindrical object like a pipe, which supported the theory that there was more than one murderer in the San Sebastián parish-house garage that night.

REVERTE COMA had arrived at his theory about the dog bites by studying autopsy photographs. An arc of four puncture wounds on the Bishop's forehead had especially drawn his attention. A cast of Baloo's teeth fit over the marks exactly, but since the photographs had been blown up twenty-five per cent this didn't seem to prove anything. Also, according to Dr. Sperber the marks didn't have the rhomboid shape of dog bites, nor were there any traces of frenzied tearing. The lesions weren't even alike, and could easily have been caused by the irregular edges of the concrete chunk. Decisive evidence of a bite would have been signs of penetration in the skull: the dog's two upper canines, each an inch long, were much longer than its worn center teeth, so for four teeth to have left any mark at all on the skin the two canines would have had to penetrate the layer of fatty flesh into the skull, perhaps even into the brain. A mere peeling back of the skin should have been—and for the ODHA experts was—enough to prove that the bone area in question was completely smooth. Nevertheless, throughout the autopsy Reverte Coma kept a large industrial pot of water on a hot plate at a constant boil. "He wants to get down to what he knows, which is bones," Palladino explained to me. Reverte Coma insisted on boiling the Bishop's skull in a search for signs of fang penetration, which, according to the other specialists, were clearly not there.

The dog-bite theory would seem to have been demolished. But at a press conference held at the end of the exhumation's second and final day, Reverte Coma embraced Otto Ardón, the prosecutor, and gushed, "What a look of triumph you have! You can see it!"

For me, Reverte Coma's performance constituted one of the most bizarre episodes in the case. In a Castilian accent ringing with Hidalgo haughtiness, he referred to the American experts as "very barbaric," and defended his dog-bite scenario. He held out one hand and slapped it with the bent fingers of the other to illustrate how a dog can bite with just its top teeth. "It's their word against mine," he said, defiantly crossing his arms over his chest, raising his chin, and sitting back in his chair. Then he acted out the crime. First, he was Father Mario, saying *"Fass!"* ("Attack," in German) to the dog; next he was Baloo, pouncing; then he was a cowering Bishop Gerardi, covering his head with his arms to ward off the dog; then he was Father Mario again, stomping on the Bishop's face with his shoe. "The individual or individuals who kicked the Bishop in the face hated him profoundly," Reverte Coma announced. "They've wanted to give this the appearance of a political crime. Lie! This is a domestic crime and that is extremely clear!"

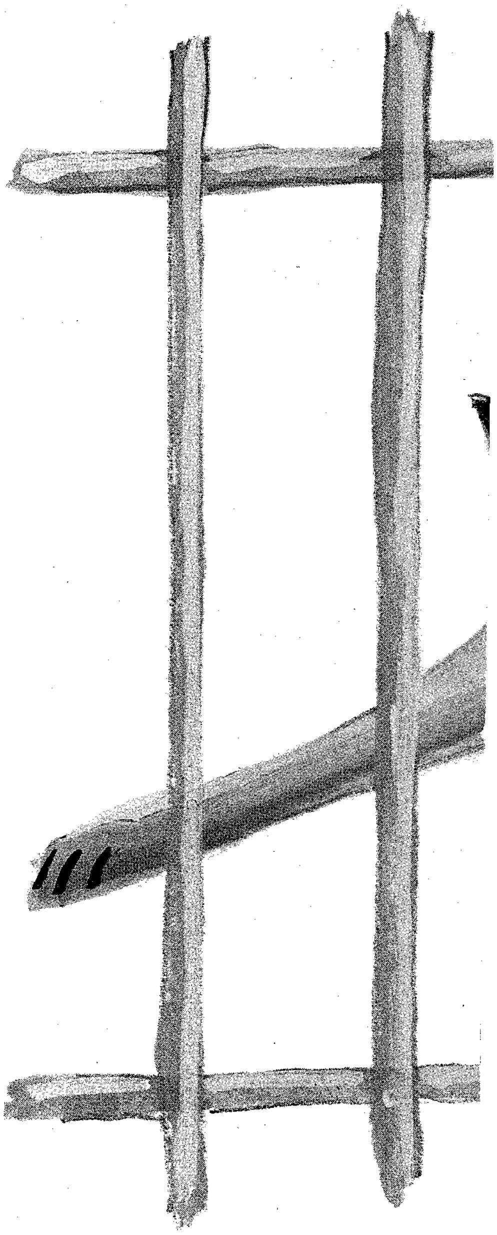
A few days later, the Guatemalan press reported that Reverte Coma had been expelled from the U.N. exhumation of the El Mozote massacre victims, in El Salvador, for impeding the investigation with ludicrous interpretations: all those very small skeletons were not massacred children, he had suggested, but adolescent guerrillas—young recruits from a race of small, malnourished men—who had died in battle. Reverte Coma is a Don Quixote enthusiast. He is the author of thirty books, among them "From Macumba to Voodoo" and "The Curse of the Pharaohs," as well as "Medical Anthropology and Don Quixote." I wondered if the clue to his behavior might not lie in the darker side of Spanish fantasy, the cruel and egotistical and honor-obsessed side that has provoked antipathy toward Cervantes' creation in some readers, such as Nabokov.

I watched a video of Baloo limping about in a dazed way at the evidentiary proceedings in the patio of the San Francisco de Asís clinic. He seemed like a decrepit, ailing, completely dispirited old dog. It was the same thick-necked dog that had growled at me, the *perro bravo*, but he didn't seem capable of much else. Besides, Bishop Gerardi's sister, who had lived for a time at the parish house while recovering from an illness, told me that although Baloo was indeed bad-tempered, he loved Bishop Gerardi and often slept at his feet while he worked at his desk or read.

Bishop Gerardi's remains were put back in his coffin and, after a simple Mass, resealed in his crypt. The prosecution, and its allies in the press, especially the newspaper *Siglo Veintiuno*, whose board of directors is made up of prominent members of a small clique of the country's very wealthiest and most conservative families, tenaciously clung to Dr. Reverte Coma's theories. The affidavits and reports turned in by Palladino and Dr. Bux and Dr. Sperber, which offered detailed explanations of why there was no possibility that any of the contested lesions were dog bites, were deemed confusing. The judge decided that neither side had proved its case. How was he supposed to know who was right? Thus the exhumation and dismemberment of the Bishop's cadaver seemed to have resolved nothing at all. Father Mario remained in prison, and Baloo went on living in a cage at the San Francisco de Asís clinic.

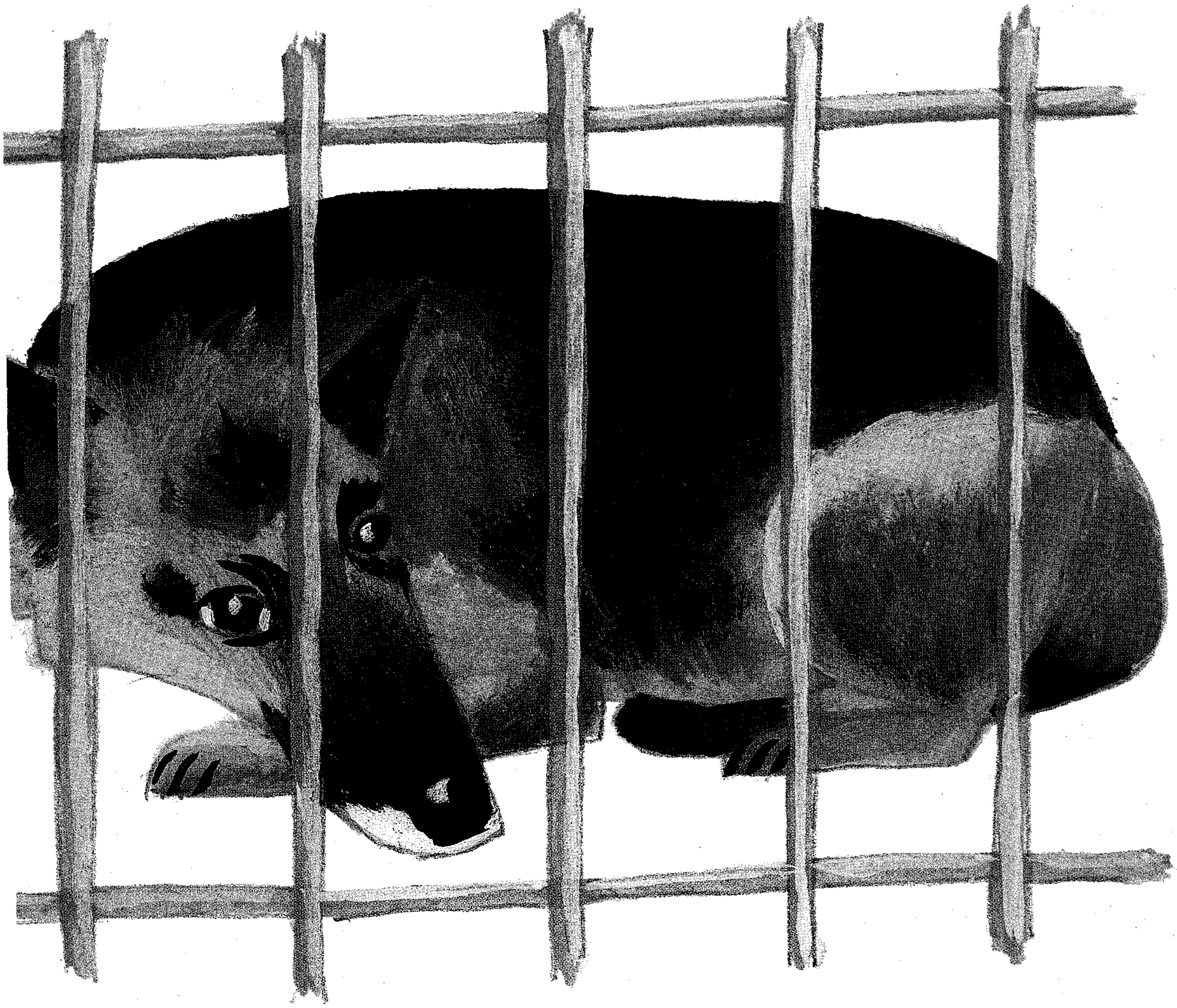
During the following weeks, the press continued to report on Baloo's confinement. When the dog's health took a turn for the worse, it was reported that veterinarians thought it best that Baloo be put down. But the decision belonged to Father Mario, and he insisted on sparing the dog he affectionately refers to as *mi gordito*, "my little fatty." A wheeled cart with a leather harness was built to help Baloo get around on his withered hindquarters.

OTTO ARDÓN, the prosecutor, resigned in December, and a new prosecutor, Celvin Galindo, took over. Galindo told me early in January that he was reluctant to proceed to trial against Father Mario. "So much evidence and potential information has been lost," Galindo said. "Eight months have been wasted. Ardón left me with no case." He admitted that he was feeling pressure to free the priest: "Public opinion is not convinced of the participation of Father Mario." But Galindo still suspected him of covering up something. "He knows more than he has told," Galindo said.



The Alleged Accomplice: Baloo, the Germa

The public had not been persuaded by the Baloo scenario, and now newspaper stories began linking Father Mario to a new theory about the crime. This one involved the Chancellor of the Curia, Monseñor Hernández. One of the "youths" who had accompanied Monseñor Hernández to the church of San Sebastián after Father Mario called him the night of the murder was a young woman named Ana Lucía Escobar, who was always described in the press as Monseñor Hernández's "niece." She was the daughter of his longtime housekeeper, Imelda Escobar, and she lived in the parish house with them. Ana Lucía had been arrested late in 1997 as part of a kidnapping ring, but, as is usual when young criminals have powerful or wealthy connections, she and the other members of the gang were soon released. A judge said there



epherd who lived in the parish house with Father Mario, was incarcerated under suspicion of having bitten the Bishop.

was not enough evidence to hold them. Now there were stories about Father Mario trafficking in stolen church icons and relics with Ana Lucía and her gang, which was called Valle del Sol. This theory suggested that the Valle del Sol gang had murdered Bishop Gerardi because he had discovered its activities. One source of these allegations—although this was not widely known—was a woman named Blanca Lydia Contreras Castillo, who had once been married to Monseñor Hernández's brother. She had travelled from her home in Canada to testify before Otto Ardón when he was still the prosecutor in the case. Her story was a ball of string made from decades of family gossip, some of it undoubtedly true, much of it exaggerated or invented.

Blanca Contreras described how Ana Lucía's mother came to work for Monseñor Hernández in the early seventies, when he was a parish priest. According to Contreras, she was a poor woman with several children, but soon began showing signs of wealth. A few years after going to work for Hernández, she became pregnant with Ana Lucía, and implied to Contreras that Hernández was the father of the child. Contreras's testimony was full of tales of the housekeeper's dealing in church valuables, and of lurid happenings years earlier when Hernández was a priest and the Orantes boys were his parishioners. She described young Mario and Ana Lucía and her friends romping naked on a church altar—an entertaining image but not a credible one, considering the twelve-year age difference between Father Mario and the girl.

Throughout her testimony, Blanca Contreras painted a picture of the Chancellor of the Curia, Monseñor Hernández, trapped in a perpetual hell, constantly threatened with exposure by his criminal housekeeper and their daughter. According to Contreras, Ana Lucía told Monseñor Hernández that she would identify him as her father if he didn't use his influence to help her and her friends, who included Marito—Father Mario. Contreras told the prosecutor that shortly before the murder she had written two letters to Bishop Gerardi, asking him to find a discreet way to disentangle Monseñor Hernández from the women. She said that she had come to believe that Bishop Gerardi was murdered because of those letters.

I spoke to several people about Ana Lucía. They had heard the stories, and asked me if I had seen both Ana Lucía and her alleged father. There is a saying in Guatemala, "*Hijo negado, pinto y parado*," meaning that if you deny that someone is your child the child will grow up looking just like you. Ana Lucía is slight and pretty, and shares Monseñor Hernández's dark complexion, soft, round face, and vivid, nearly Asian eyes. Fernando Penados doesn't think that she had a direct role in Bishop Gerardi's murder, but it is widely suspected that Monseñor Hernández is her father. Penados told me that Ana Lucía's identification papers have always listed her father as "unknown," but that last fall, when stories of her suspected involvement in the Gerardi case got around, a man came forward to say he was the father.

I talked to Ana Lucía on the phone a few times. Her voice is sweetly girlish. She denied all the accusations against her, and said that she had broken up with her boyfriend of several years, a Valle del Sol gang member who had a history of arrests for such things as possession of drugs and unregistered guns. The only time she seemed surprised was when I mentioned Blanca Lydia Contreras. She knew who she was but had no idea that she'd come from Canada to testify against her. A problem for prosecutors who might try to pin the murder on Ana Lucía Escobar is that her account of the night of the murder—that she was awakened by her mother at midnight, and that she then drove Monseñor Hernández and a cousin to San Sebastián, where they arrived minutes ahead of the firemen—has been thoroughly corroborated. Ana Lucía is the "youth" described by Father Mario who made phone calls alerting Church officials to the Bishop's murder. But could she also have made the call to the pay phone outside the military academy at San Marcos the night of the murder? The phone that was ripped from its post when newspaper accounts of the call appeared? Did the Army manage in some way to use the Valle del Sol gang to carry out the crime?

EXCELLENT COFFEE SHOP

Where did it go? Some guy
In a T-shirt folding eggs
Into a quadrilateral on the griddle:

Cheese omelette. "Excellent"
In looping neon. Streaky
Plate glass, marmalade

In a saucer, humid home fries.
And from there, to the greenish light
Of the Lexington Avenue line:

Downtown for me, Summit, N.J., for you.
What was it like, reading Pliny
As you slid under the Hudson's

Unfathomable weight?
History's glimpses and rumor.
One friend dead "of unknown causes,"

One afternoon, I visited Father Mario and his mother in his room at the Ciudad Vieja hospital, where he had been taken with a pulmonary infection aggravated by other stress-related conditions, including fainting spells and heart palpitations. An armed guard stood in the stairwell outside his room. Father Mario was wearing a bathrobe and pajamas and had grown a beard. He kept his eyes riveted on the floor nearly the whole time that we spoke, although the visit was quite brief. He gesticulated angrily when I mentioned Ana Lucía, and insisted that he had never met her until she turned up with Monseñor Hernández at the parish house on the night of the murder. But the Orantes brothers have been close to Monseñor Hernández's household for years, and the Intocables say that Ana Lucía's name and telephone number were found in Father Mario's room.

In early February, Monseñor Hernández resigned from his post as Chancellor of the Curia. He said that he was not retiring because of what was being said and published about the Gerardi case but simply because "in less than two months I will be sixty-five, and I'm tired."

FERNANDO PENADOS had feared that the witness whose information had been most useful to him, the taxi-driver, might also have been murdered, but the taxi-driver turned up again when he went to see his parish priest about a problem he was having with his thirteen-year-old daughter. His name is Jorge Diego Méndez Perussina, and he is the nephew of General Roberto Perussina, a former Minister of Defense. He is a scruffy, jittery, sweet-natured man with something of the high-strung hilarity, and even the look, of Dennis Hopper. He has been a drug user from the age of twelve. For thirty years, he lived outside the law, always keeping an eye out for the police. Until very recently in Guatemala, four-digit license-plate numbers, especially in certain combinations, belonged to police or military vehicles. When he saw the shirtless man standing outside the white Toyota Corolla that night, he assumed a bust was in process.

When his family learned what he saw and that he was willing to testify, the taxi-driver began receiving visits from relatives he hadn't seen in years, including General Perussina, and a cousin assigned to a section of the Min-

Another in jail indefinitely, others
Missing in action, or selling real estate.
It's only been twenty-five years.

What's success, anyway? Those
Were the best omelettes I can remember
Though they weren't even omelettes, of course.

Yorkville today's a rainy mess
Of antique shops in slummy disarray.
Our old high school's grimy in gray light:

Central Park is full of bus fumes.
What did we talk about, in our booth
At the Excellent Coffee Shop, while we ate

What they gave us? Where's the cook,
The blue-rinsed cashier? Whose children
Bust through the school doors at 2:32,

And where do they go?

—Robert Long

istry of Defense formerly known as Vulture Central. Nevertheless, he gave his testimony to the new prosecutor, Celvin Galindo, in January. The day before he testified, he was abducted and forced into a car by two men. They drove him around blindfolded for two hours, and the only words he heard his captors speak were "Just give the order to kill this son of a big whore once and for all." When they stopped so that one of the two men could make a call from a phone booth, he managed to fling himself from the car—badly scraping his knees and hands, which he showed me—and ran to a nearby hospital. Given his family connections, he thought it had probably been more of an attempt to terrify him than an actual thwarted "disappearance."

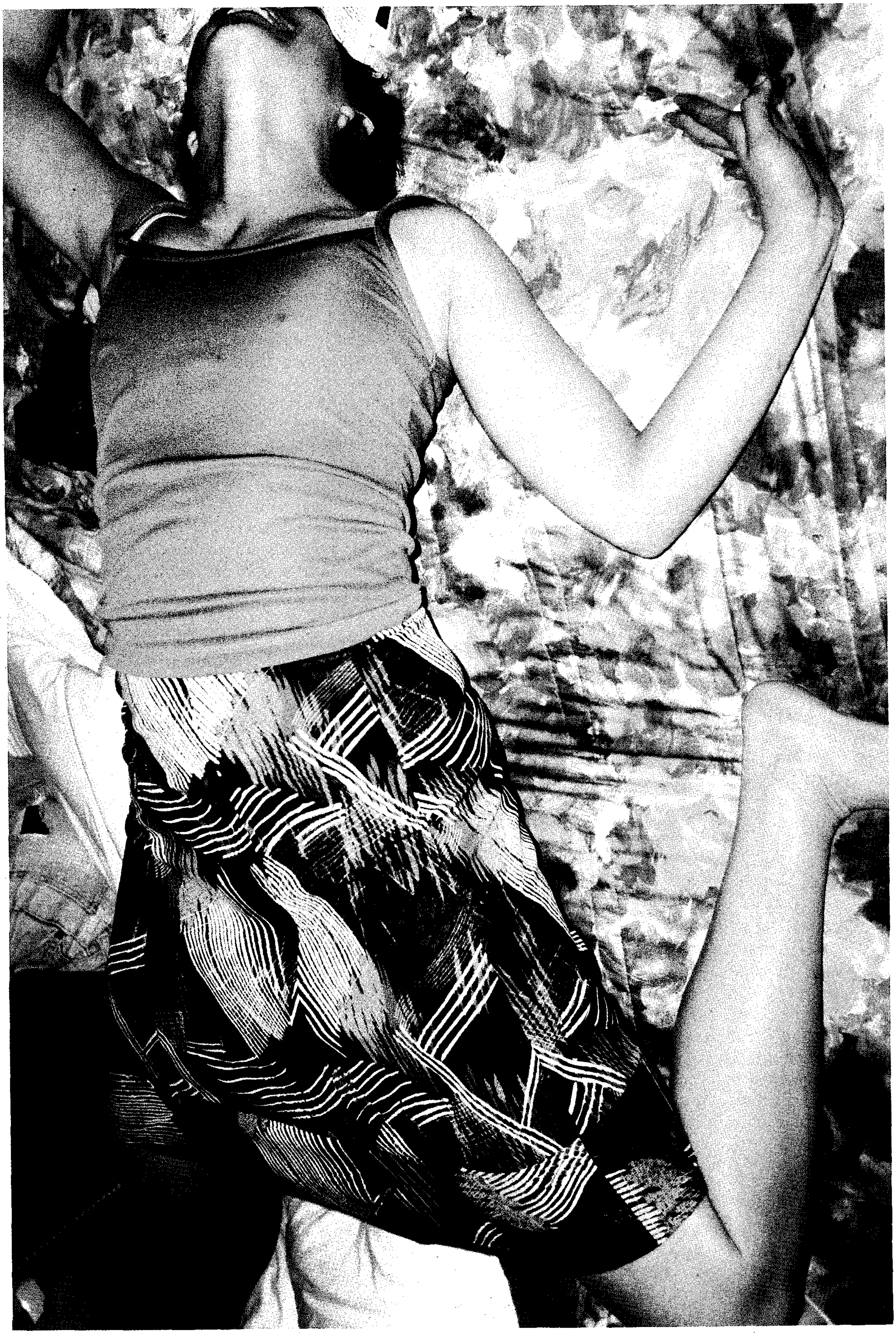
On Ash Wednesday, February 17th, a hearing was held in the hospital where Father Mario was being treated, and a new judge in the case granted ODHA's request that the priest be freed but that he remain a subject of investigation. The judge also ruled that the taxi-driver's testimony was pertinent. The day after the hearing, the taxi-driver's name appeared in the newspapers for the first time, and his mother received a phone call from her brother, General Perussina, saying that her son was going to be killed and should flee the country immediately. The taxi-driver left on February 25th.

There is a feeling at ODHA that Father Mario will feel less inclined than ever to talk now that he is free. He has been widely portrayed—including by Church spokesmen who are trying to avoid besmirching the priesthood further—as an innocent victim of unjust persecution. Some young priests, well aware of his somewhat dubious priestly qualities, joke that within ten years Father Mario will be a bishop—assuming that he isn't arrested again, as Ana Lucía's accomplice. After his release from the hospital, Father Mario continued his convalescence at his parents' house. His mother went to the San Francisco de Asís clinic to pick up Baloo. A crowd of local and foreign reporters watched the dog being led to her car, but they were not permitted to go to the house to witness Baloo's reunion with Father Mario. The night-shift veterinarian told me over the phone that a more technologically advanced cart that will help Baloo walk is being built in the United States.

The government is under intense pressure to convict someone of the Bishop's murder. It is an election year in Guatemala, and President Arzú's party has been weakened by the scandalous handling of the case. The President needs to defend the integrity of the justice system. Some of his advisers are surely telling him that now is the moment to open an investigation into the involvement of the Limas and the Army. But the easiest solution to the problem is to insist that there was never anything seriously wrong with the government's theories in the first place. To that end, prosecutors continue to investigate Ana Lucía, the Valle del Sol gang, Monseñor Hernández, Father Mario, and even Baloo—but not the Army. An F.B.I. crime lab reported late in February that DNA from the bloody sweater found near Bishop Gerardi's body matched DNA found in Father Mario's room, and this new evidence could be used to arrest him again, although the crime scene was so contaminated that DNA from the sweater could have made its way nearly anywhere.

I HAD come to think of Bishop Gerardi's murder as Guatemala's last great nineteenth-century crime. It was redolent of Masonic and Jesuitical intrigue and it had propelled the country's two most influential institutions, the Army and the Church, into their bitterest confrontation since the eighteen-seventies, when the Liberal revolution triumphed and General Barrios expelled the Jesuits from the country; turned nuns out of their cloisters; converted churches into prisons, Masonic temples, and post offices; and gave Protestants, who had previously been deemed heretics, a foothold they never lost. General Barrios was the tyrant who the Nicaraguan exile Enrique Guzmán said had made even the drunks in Guatemala discreet, and who in many ways shaped the society that exists today.

Fernando Penados and ODHA had tried to defend the Church against the machinations of the Army, but by pushing for the truth about Bishop Gerardi's murder they had brought to light weaknesses in the Church itself. One day, when we were talking about Ana Lucía and the Orantes brothers and what revelations might lie ahead, Penados said, hesitantly, "I hope I'm doing the right thing." He is not a particularly devout Catholic, and he rarely goes to Mass, but I believe that he was sincere when he said, "This is about trying to get justice for the murder of a great man, which elevates everything to a spiritual plane. You feel God watching." ♦



FICTION

STILL-LIFE WITH PARTICLE BOARD

Without sex, could this be called an affair?

BY CHARLIE BUCK

It was spring when they met; the tips of the pale-green ferns in his back yard curled like Joe Cocker's fingers. Not much had opened up yet. It was assumed that would happen, as it always did, in time. Now these same ferns had been baked by the sun into stiff orange tatters, and he still couldn't get an erection.

Fine by her. Things were glorious as they were, thanks. Hours of making out—they often missed movies or dinner because time simply dissolved, like sugar in water. When they finally staggered to their feet, lips were bruised, cheeks chafed pink, eyes rolled back in rapture. Often it was the next day. She felt as if she'd accidentally entered a parallel universe and she was in no hurry to depart.

It was probably a medication he was taking for his blood pressure. He offered not to take it, but she didn't think he should risk his life to have sex. That was a lot of pressure to put on a penis. It occurred to her that his penis was from another time, another epoch, when courtship was slower and more sure. He was impatient, but his penis was taking its time.

They were spending Sunday together when he decided to experiment. (This was not so long ago, before impotence could be treated with a blue pill.) He was squeamish, and she was surprised he was able to do it by himself. She'd had an uneasy feeling that she would be called on to read the instructions, to help. But he'd done it, and even though it hadn't worked he was proud of the attempt. Afterward he showed her the little parts that helped insert the slender medication into his penis, where it dissolved and increased circulation. Theoretically.

"Weren't you scared?" she asked.

"Yes," he said proudly.

"So what happened?"

"Well, I thought if I was going to have an erection for four hours we might as well spend the first one eating breakfast. But, you know, there was definitely something going on for a while there."

"But the way you showed it to me," she said—in the kitchen he'd tugged the waistband of his pajamas and given her a peek—"it was like you were showing me leftovers you weren't sure of. 'Can we eat this casserole?' It wasn't as if you were suggesting we do something with it. I didn't recognize that as foreplay."

"Yeah, I wasn't ready to own it, that's for sure. An erection! In the wrong hands that could be a dangerous thing."

"No kidding," she said.

They each took up sections of the Sunday paper. He was fifty-three, recently divorced, a historian of contemporary art. She'd entered his life the same unsettling way she'd entered his class at the end of the semester, clomping to the back of the room to listen to his Eva Hesse lecture. She was a good fifteen years older than most of his students but was dressed like them in flimsy clothing and substantial shoes. It turned out she was an adjunct in the English department, with no respect for the hierarchy, no yen for tenure: a teacher who didn't want to teach.

They'd been having an affair for three months, although she wasn't sure it should be called that if they weren't having sex. Or "sayx," as she would say. She was from Virginia, but he couldn't always hear that when she talked; it was more like music at the interstices of her words. He was mad for her voice. He didn't know what he wanted more—to have her underneath him with their mouths bruising each other or to listen to her talk.

He was quite certain that what they were having was an affair. What else would you call it, he asked. Snacking, she suggested. She loved what they were doing, but she didn't quite consider it an affair.

After a bit, he folded his paper and said, "Do you think I should try another one?"

"Well, maybe. But what happens if you overdose?"

Did she want him to take it or not? He couldn't tell. He reread the instructions. "Possible side effects include blacking out." His eyebrows shot up.

"I don't think that will happen to you," she said.

"Why?" he asked.

"Well, I think people faint because of a drop in blood pressure, a displacement of blood—in this case because it's, you know, rushing from your brain to someplace else. But a lot of it would have to rush."

"Thanks," he said bitterly. He went into the bathroom—she heard the water running, the toilet flushing, the silence of extended study in the mirror, various poses. When he came back he said, "That's twenty-five bucks down the drain."

"We could have bought a book," she said.

"Or gone to the movies." He settled in beside her on the couch and began to rub her feet.

"That feels great," she said.

He maintained that she was obsessed with "penetration," as he called it. During their first two or three make-out sessions there had been moments when she thought, What now? More hours of touching and kissing, it turned out. More than she'd had since she was sixteen. It was such a luxuriously sensual place to be in—a note to hold, like a breath. She didn't think you could go backward in experience this way, but here they were, shimmering in adolescence. They were experimental, but now she liked her body, was not embarrassed

JOHN PATRICK SALISBURY, "JEN, BACKBEND ON BED"

"Son, can you spare a couple of minutes to talk about your tuition?"

by it. Improvisational. She loved his body and got to know more of it than she might have if he'd been able to get an erection. Everybody in the world wasn't doing what they were doing: only a few million lucky teen-agers, the experience like a flying carpet that would go out from beneath them once they began having real sex.

He brooded about what all the other adults were doing. He apologized every time he failed at this, as he saw it, although she saw it, each time, as another wildly unusual day in bed. An entire day of touching and kissing—it was like an erotic spa.

Once, as she was washing greens for a salad, he said, "How about a dildo?"

She looked along the counter in confusion—for mashing garlic?

No. No way. She was enjoying exactly this and wanted to see how long it could last. It had a splendor that felt fleeting. Around him even the air seemed delicately textured, like raw silk; simply breathing became sexual. She kept thinking of the term "free fall." She felt weightless with him, unburdened of responsibility, except for pleasure. It wasn't quite real.

She had once read an article about a woman in Nebraska who had passed as a man. Many of her lovers, who were girls, said it was the best sex they'd ever had; it only dawned on them later, during interviews, that they hadn't seen their lover naked. She had been murdered by two jealous men, it turned out, who found her method of pleasure threatening because it didn't require a penis.

"WOULD you like to see a video?"

"Umm, O.K.," she said gamely. She had a bad feeling.

But it was a documentary on Francis Bacon, in which the painter, tottering about the ruins of his studio like a dishevelled ballerina, talked about the "shorthand of sensation." When his interviewer said, "We want to live in a state of voluptuousness," Bacon replied, "How right you are. Whatever it is."

She turned to him, saw his chin tucked against his chest as he wistfully gnawed his lower lip. "That's the state *we* exist in," she said.

"What?"

"Voluptuousness."

"Yeah?" he said.

HE lived on the top floor of a Victorian house, in a town a few hours upriver from New York. His living room and bedroom were narrowed by the roof, which cut off the ceiling at odd angles. The apartment was sparsely furnished. She couldn't decide if this was provisional, part of his newly divorced state, or if he didn't care, if furniture simply existed to stack books on. The first time she came over, an end table he'd given up on assembling was piled next to the couch—a heap of dowels and slats and wedges. While he mixed gin-and-tonics she sat on the floor and built it, using only her nail file. Then she got up, placed her drink on its perfectly level surface, and used the file tip to tame a cuticle.

She'd expected the table would go beside the bed, but he left it in the living room. His bedroom was a pretty grim affair: a box spring, a shiny lamp from the seventies (but lacking irony), a tattered Courbet poster of women winnowing grain. She bought him thick cotton sheets tinted a buttery yellow, but he hadn't followed her initiative and spruced things up. Still, she didn't mind; the nondescript surroundings faded out, leaving only the bed, which always seemed lit with late-afternoon sun.

The living room was spare but pleasing, a couple of beige couches and an explosion of art books and journals: de Chirico, de Kooning, Delaunay, de Stijl, topped with Delacroix's letters. Alice Neel's portraits next to Morandi's late still-lifes. The TV set barely balanced on a narrow crate—once or twice when they were dancing they came close to knocking it over.

"Why don't you get a TV stand?" she asked him.

"They all looked so gimcrack to me."

Gimcrack?

Every other room seemed incidental. The kitchen table was a snarl of newspapers and magazines and mail they had to shove back for a ledge to put their coffee on.

His books were pristine, the spines

unbroken, the covers unstained. When she'd loaned him one of her books he tried to conceal his horror at its state.

"How did fish scales get inside 'Madame Bovary'? " he asked.

She looked up. "I don't remember that part."

"Inside the *book*," he said, and flicked one at her, a tiny pale Frisbee.

"It's a mystery," she said. "Would you like some tea?" She stood and dropped her dog-eared copy of "Practical Veneering" on the coffee table, contributing to another one of her strange installations: a squeeze bottle of shampoo, an X-ACTO knife, a styptic pencil, a thin summer sock, a mostly empty bag from Dunkin' Donuts. She was beginning to treat his house like one of her books.

THE next time she came over, he began darting back and forth from the bathroom like a laboratory animal getting its nerve up to do some task that would deliver a treat. Finally he went in and shut the door. Whenever he stayed in the bathroom she was afraid he was inserting the medication. She was astounded by what he was willing to go through for her. Or for himself.

She hated the product.

"What's this 'Mood'?" she called out. "It exists to destroy mood. We'll have to fight to recapture mood."

"Let's not go throwing stones at our chickens before they're hatched," he said, coming out of the bathroom.

"What?" His attempts to sound downhome were disasters.

"Why are we arguing when I've just taken an aphrodisiac?" he asked.

She rolled her eyes.

"Is there ambivalence in this room?"

"Maybe some," she admitted.

"You'd take me more seriously if I were fucking you," he said.

"Maybe. But this is fine."

"*Fine*?"

"For now," she said.

No wonder he couldn't fuck her. She never gave him the slightest reassurance about the future. She didn't seem to want anything from him but what she got, which he found alarming. For the first time in his life he wasn't bored, itchy, antagonistic—*he* was the one who wanted more. It was horrible.

Oh, he felt weary. What toil all this was. He lay down beside her. "It's not going to work," he said. "I'm not supposed to lie down yet."

She stretched along his side and lightly touched his upper arms. She nuzzled his throat and kissed his chin. She threw one leg over him and dragged it slowly against the terrain, but he wasn't playing. She studied his grave profile, angled up at the ceiling. His high, almost gaunt cheekbones. An unusually graceful nose, marked only by the indentation where his glasses rested. Bottom lip pleated in thought. He looked like a sheepherder resigned to watching his flock dwindle.

"Get up," she said, and pushed his shoulder.

He sat up.

"This is incredibly sexy," he said dolefully.

"Stand up and walk around," she said, prodding his back. He did.

"Great foreplay, huh?" he said, straightening some books on the shelf. "I can organize my closets and arouse you, all while standing here."

"Show me some basketball moves," she said.

"Right," he said. But then he showed her a few.

"That's real cute," she said. "But maybe you should come over here now."

He looked down.

LATER he asked, "What would you give it?"

"It or you?"

"It."

"A six," she said.

"A six! After going through all that? After all, something happened."

"Yeah, but everything fun that happened was us. Medicine is snake oil. It's rotten of them to pretend it really works, so then you feel the failure is yours."

"But they don't promise youthful erections," he said.

"Yeah, but what does that mean? Even a slight improvement and they'd say, 'Well, you weren't really expecting a youthful erection, were you?' They give you so little, and shame you out of expecting more."

"So little?" he said.

She sat up, the sheets falling away from her athletic shoulders. "Look, I want to say something. You're better off without it. It's off-putting. The way you are is pretty great—your body completely

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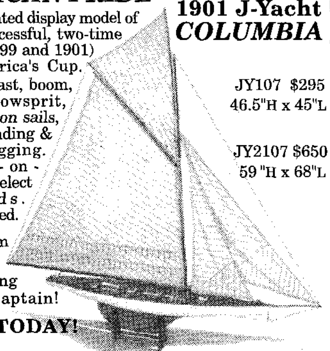

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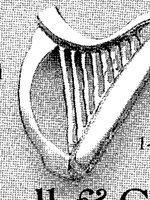

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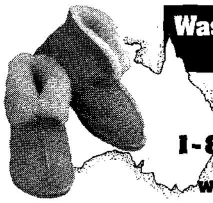

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satisfies me. It’s your mind that’s fucking things up.”

He was quiet for a long while.

“We have kind of straight, dull sex when we try that thing,” he said. He was coming around to her point of view.

“Yeah, it’s like married life under Eisenhower.”

“What would you know about that?”

“I’m guessing,” she said, sprawling over him, her face pressing into his gorgeous black and silver chest hair. “It’s such a free-for-all without it.”

“We accept all denominations,” he said. He played with the insubstantial curls at her temples, tugging them, straightening them with his fingers. He rubbed his textured five-o’clock cheek against her face, sighed as he kissed her ears.

“That’s so nice,” she whispered.

“I like touching you up there,” he said shyly.

ONE day she arrived to find him glowering at an imposing crate in the middle of his living room. “I never would have ordered this if I’d known it had to be assembled. All I wanted was a place for the damned TV, so why did I go for a home-entertainment center?” He showed her the picture in the catalogue—an impressive edifice, with room for books, CDs, TV, stereo. “No way I’ll ever be able to build that,” he said.

But she saw he’d taken the parts out of the boxes and made some rudimentary effort toward putting them in order. How daunting it must seem to him. It moved her that he’d made the attempt. But he was going to have to deal with the assembly himself—she couldn’t feign interest in this project.

“Why don’t you get a bed?” she said.

“I’ve got one,” he said.

“But it’s sort of hideous.”

“Hideous?”

“It’s just that it could be so much better.” She put her arms around him, leaned her face into his throat. She held him until his body relaxed. “But I’ve spent many happy hours in the bed you have.”

He turned toward the bathroom.

“Don’t you dare go in there,” she said.

He looked at her despairingly.

“Why don’t you try tying me up?” she said.

“That’ll never work,” he said.

“Why not?”

“First of all, your being forced to do anything is ridiculous. The idea that you wouldn’t be completely in control, no matter how tied up you might be. It’s not any thrill that’s missing. It’s . . . you. It’s part of you.”

She had a bleak feeling, like watching a last ray of sunlight fall away. What he wanted was abstract. She didn’t know if it was in her.

“Let’s go and eat and come back and pretend we are married,” she said. He slung one arm around her neck and pulled her head to his. They rubbed their hard brows against each other.

Later he said, “You don’t seem like your usual libidinous self.”

“I’m pretending to be married.”

And it was exciting for him to pull her close, to think of her contained in his bed, night after night. A woman sleeping beside him, somewhat available, maybe not as available as someone you were having an affair with. A woman who loved him. It was embarrassing but it was working.

“Try and stay awake for this,” he said, and she giggled.

“O.K., now let’s pretend we are dating,” he said, trying to please her. And felt her flower just as he began to wither.

SHE was always over at his place—he liked that, but he never knew what she was thinking. Lately, she had begun to look at the pile of unassembled parts in the living room in a more appraising way, the way he sometimes felt she now looked at him. She would make small conducting gestures with her hands, holding her forefingers a few inches apart.

“What are you doing?” he finally asked.

“I’m going to build it,” she announced. “Where’s your drill?”

“My God, you need a *drill*? Who has these things? Do they think their customers are lumberjacks?”

“You don’t have a drill?” she asked quietly.

“I’ve spent fifty years without a drill.”

“Do you have a needle file?”

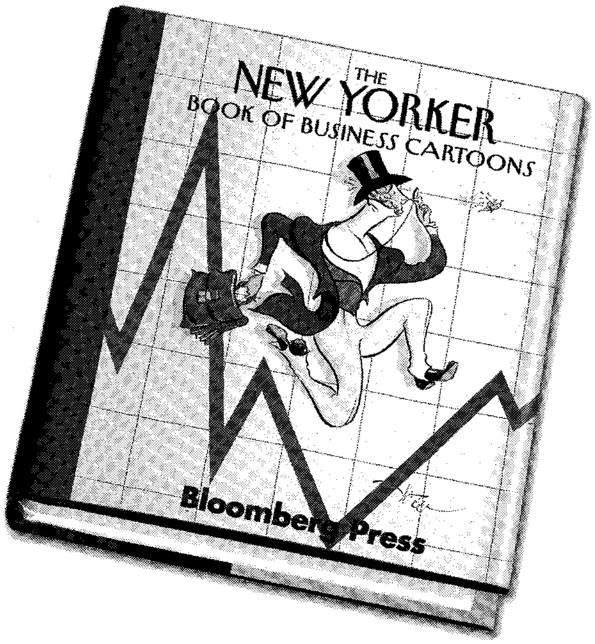
“A needle file?”

She studied him, then asked, “A nail?”

A nail he had. She rocked it in a hole, trying to enlarge it. “This isn’t wood,” she said. “It’s some kind of particle board.”

“You mean I’m going to have an entertainment center that’s not even wood?” Great, he thought. Bachelor life with no

Very funny business, indeed!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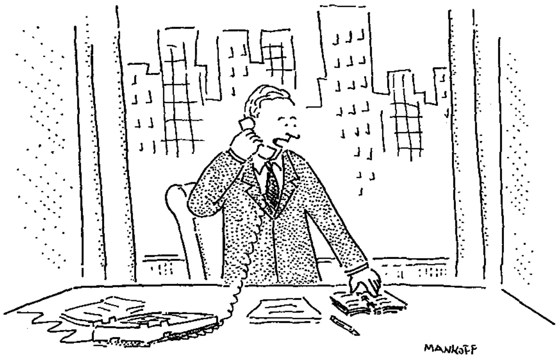
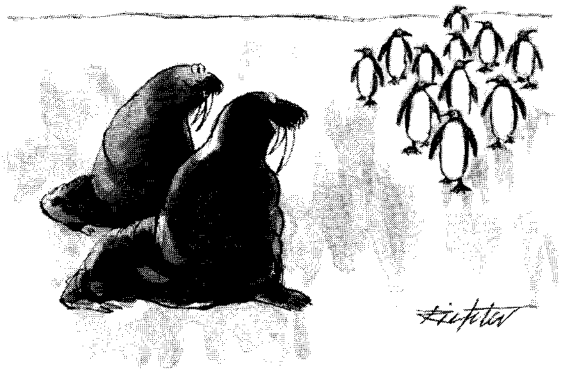
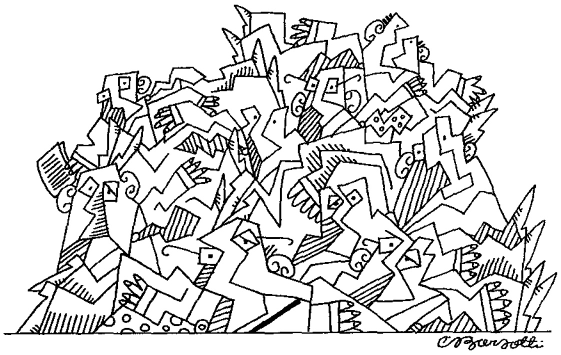


"No, Thursday's out. How about never—is never good for you?"



"Here come the suits!"



"Wentworth, could I take another look at that reorganization plan?"

BLOOMBERG PRESS

erections, and an entertainment center made of paste.

"No," she said, trying to speak around the pegs held in her mouth. "You're going to have a bed."

After a minute of looking at the parts, the parts that were his future entertainment center, he said, "A bed?"

She spat the pegs into her palm. "A fabulous bed, something with—oh, turrets and parapets."

"A moat," he suggested.

"But really. There's all this material—let's build a four-poster. High-tech yet romantic."

"I think my bed should be modest and unassuming."

"Don't be silly," she said. "Let me build it and then you can decide."

"Don't waste your time. My bed is fine." He felt the way he had as a small boy. "My bed will have to do."

He stalked out of the room. Well, he hadn't said yes, but he hadn't exactly said no. She knew she should follow him but she was elbow deep in all these neat little pieces.

He sat in the kitchen, fuming. All of his wishes slipped off her. It was as if she were some form of impervious jelly: she seemed so receptive, yet nothing sank in. He was beginning to think his penis had recognized this all along.

He stormed back. "What you are doing is insane, it can't be done! You can't build a bed from all this . . . totally unrelated stuff."

"Watch me," she said.

She unscrewed and removed metal standards from thin sheets of panelling, then used a screwdriver to score fresh lines into the unfinished sides. When she stood each panel upright and bent it along the lines, something like a column emerged. "It's going to be a four-poster," she said, squeezing out epoxy.

"Oy," he said.

Her hair was twisted into a little rooster comb on top of her head; her face frowned in concentration as she wiped off some excess glue. It scraped his heart to watch her.

"Help me carry these," she said.

They balanced what looked like goalposts against each end of the bed. The room suddenly seemed filled with expectation. She stood on the mattress and stretched her arms high, hammering a metal rod into something. The whole thing looked precarious to him. She stepped down at last, put the pillows in place, and turned to face him.

"I'm sleeping on the couch," he said.

Yet they approached harmony. They were in the living room now, dancing again. A slow-jazz CD: she could almost name it. He was a wonderful dancer. She was not as good but could sense the secret intelligence of his feet and follow along.

"Everything is not a polka," he murmured, close to her ear.

"Can't I just stand on top of your shoes?"

"Sure." He was touched.

Her feet were cold and bony, like the greenish ones Grünewald painted on his Christ. She was naked except for her bright-blue bra—the one that stained her breasts when she sweated. She leaned into him, balanced on his feet. Several times he danced them by the mirror—her wild hair, her white back, his hands holding her waist. Everything was a matter of timing, and, he knew from dancing, timing took practice.

"Excuse me for a second," he said, tucking her into a chair. They exchanged looks.

It wasn't for him or her that he was attempting this, she thought; it was for them. What a terrifyingly solid word "them" was, like cement setting up around her ankles. Still, the room was empty without him.

He walked back and lifted her to him as the TV trembled. They stood for a time, gazing down at their feet.

She led him to the bedroom. She leaned against him and they fell into the bed while the posts swayed ominously. "Don't you love it?" she asked, rolling to face him more intently. "Don't you?" Her fingers touched his hair, her face grown suddenly so grave that he feared a declaration. Shocked, he pressed his lips to hers to forestall it.

She stirred him. The space between them diminished: him kissing her, biting her top lip, their teeth clicking. They were jostling the construction, parts of which seemed to be working loose—he could hear the squeaks of metal pulling away from wood. Something smacked against her, he heard it, but her groan was of satisfaction. He felt a dull rain of pegs, then the whoosh of a narrow miss, the loosened articulation of the whole thing getting ready to collapse or take its first lumbering step. ♦

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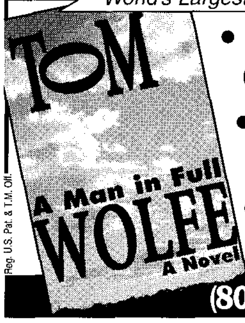
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THE CRITICS

BOOKS

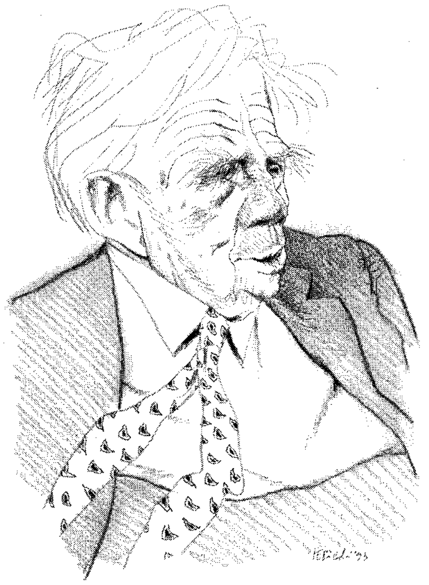
POET ON THE FAULT LINE

A new biography looks at Robert Frost through his poems.

BY JOHN UPDIKE

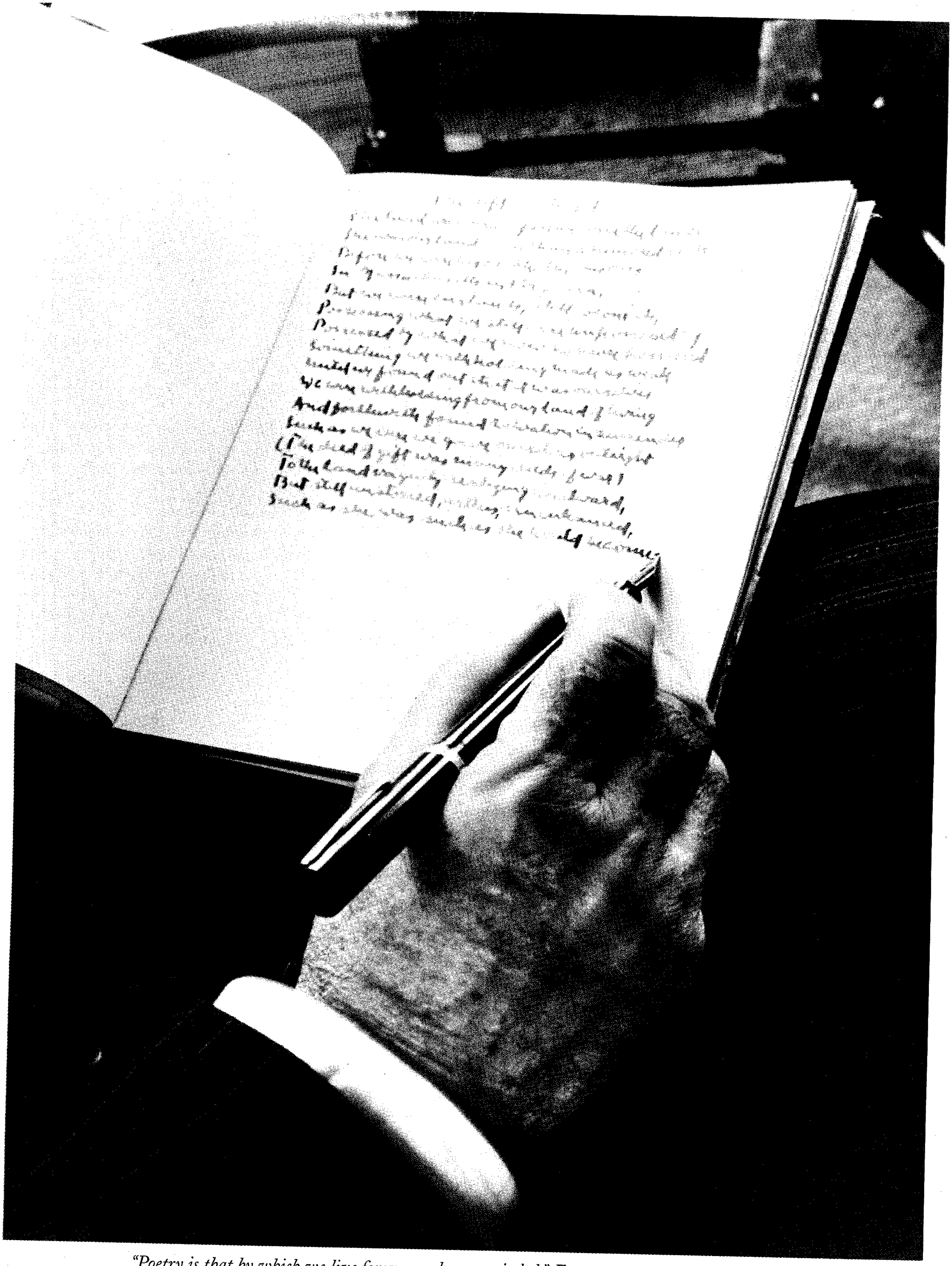
FROM one perspective, the life of Robert Frost (1874-1963) was a triumph. His childhood impoverished and rather rootless, his education intermittent, his temperament depressive and combative, he did not see his first book of poems published until he was nearly forty; yet he lived to become the most popular and honored American poet of the century—as William H. Pritchard dryly put it, "He became the goodest greyest poet since Walt Whitman." But Whitman never read at a Presidential inauguration, or earned a handsome living giving public readings, or won the equivalent of Frost's four Pulitzer Prizes for poetry.

From another perspective, Frost's life was a Job-like series of intimate disasters, which he evinced, for his eighty-eight years, in chronic psychosomatic complaints and alienating compulsions. His parents, who met as schoolteachers and shared an interest in literature, were mismatched, though their familiar names, Will and Belle, nicely chimed. His father, William Prescott Frost, Jr.—the only child of a New Hampshire farm family, a Harvard Phi Beta Kappa, a San Francisco journalist with political ambitions, a drinker, a professing atheist, a gun lover, a sometimes abusive husband and parent—died when Robert was eleven, leaving the family with eight dollars. Robert's mother, born Isabelle Moodie, in Leith, near Edinburgh, was the child of a sea captain who drowned soon after her birth and "a hussy who ran away from the arduous duties of motherhood"; her father's parents shipped her off to Ohio at the age of eleven. Six years older than her husband, Belle was a mystical Swedenborgian who published religious poetry and whose brave attempts to support her family with schoolteaching in New England eventually led to Robert's being called into class to maintain discipline. He later spoke of her "incipient insanity"; a friend called her "a queer woman." When Robert, at the age of seven, began to hear voices, this was congruent with his mother's mystical bent. She died of cancer in 1900. That same year, Frost's first child, Elliott, who was three, died of typhoid fever; Frost blamed himself for not getting better medical care, and later said that it was "like murdering his own child." Elinor, his wife, went into a steep depression, and though she bore him four more children (a daughter, Lesley, had been born the previous year; another daughter, Elinor Bettina, died soon after she was born, in 1907), their relations were never the same. The children gave him much eventual grief: Marjorie, the youngest and Frost's pet, died in 1934, of a postpartum infection; Frost's son Carol killed himself with a deer rifle at the age of thirty-eight, in 1940, two years after his mother died of a heart attack; and Irma, the second daughter, after a long history of mental illness and an unhappy marriage, was committed to an insane asylum, where she lived, supported by Frost and his legacy, until 1981. Frost's only sibling, Jeanie, also ended in a mental institution, from which she wrote her brother, "I am very peculiar and did not start right. If I ever was well and natural it was before I can remember." She died in 1929.



No one could take such an avalanche of family woe lightly; Frost tended to take it all upon himself. As his adult children's marital woes and hospital bills mounted, he wrote to Louis Untermeyer, "All this sickness and scatteration of the family is our fault and not our misfortune or I wouldn't admit it. It's a result and a judgment on us." He thus echoes his dying mother, who, in a hectic household scene, had pronounced that little Elliott's death was "God's judgment." There was no lack of blaming in the Frost family. Immediately after Elinor's death, Frost asked Lesley, the child who had inherited the biggest share of his tough and enduring spirit, if he might now live with her. She re-

TULLIO PERICOLI; OPPOSITE: ERIC SCHAAL/LIFE MAGAZINE ©TIME INC.



"Poetry is that by which we live forever and ever unjaded," Frost wrote in a letter to a friend.

sponded with a flat no and, according to Lawrance Thompson's three-volume biography, an outburst of accusation:

> She said she had seen him cause so much injury to the lives of his own children—particularly to Irma, Carol, and Marjorie—that she would not permit him to move into her home, where he might also injure the lives of her two daughters. Her rage increased as she went on to insist, through her tears, that she could not forgive him for his having ruined her mother's life. It was his fault, she said, that her mother was dead, for it was his own selfishness which had forced her mother to climb those stairs to the upper quarters, repeatedly. . . . Then she hurt him most by concluding that he was the kind of artist who never should have married, or at least never should have had a family.

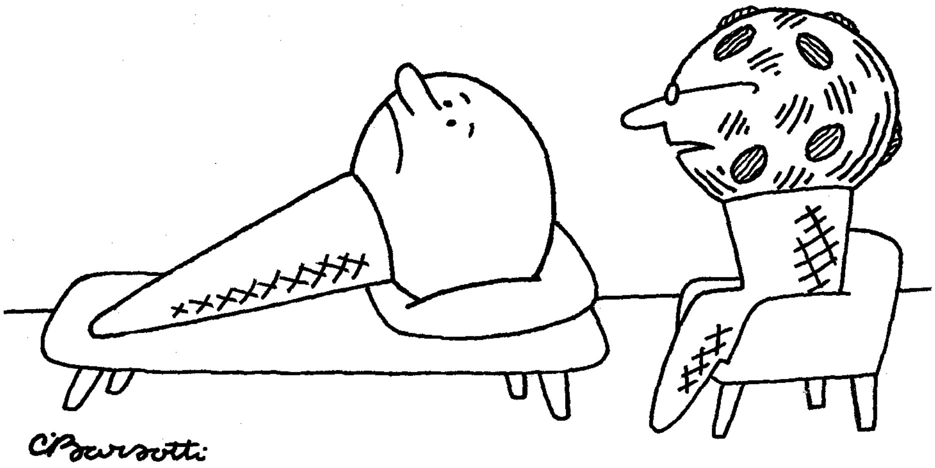
These must have been bitter words to hear for a man who, whatever his lapses of paternal attention, and however much oxygen his own ego had sucked out of the household atmosphere, had spent countless bucolic hours in his children's company, entering into their games and sharing with them his love of nature and his sense of fun. The four growing children were an intrinsic part of the years spent on a thirty-acre farm in Derry, New Hampshire, from 1900 to 1911, where he found his voice as a poet and his most treasured and characteristic images. Years later, in "Directive," he returns in his mind to the ruined site of this idyll:

> First there's the children's house of make
>   believe,
> Some shattered dishes underneath a
>   pine,
> The playthings in the playhouse of the
>   children.
> Weep for what little things could make
>   them glad.

Frost was first a poet but a family man close second, and perhaps his crowning domestic grief was that, after Elinor's death, he fell in love with a married woman, Kathleen Morrison, who declined to divorce her husband and marry Frost, though she served him, for an undetermined period, as a mistress and, for his last twenty-five years, as a proprietorial secretary and manager. But there was a terrible loneliness to him as he reaped the rewards of those years, an endless rambling quest for reassurance, speaking and reading and reciting and collecting prizes and honorary degrees and, afraid since childhood of the dark, sitting up past midnight with anyone who would listen to him talk.

The many Frost biographies, the first of which dates back to 1927, have a troubled history of their own. The early portraits, from Gorham B. Munson's initial biography up to Elizabeth Shepley Sergeant's and Sidney Cox's books of 1960 and 1961, respectively, tend to depict Frost as a wise farmer-poet embodying, in Sergeant's phrases, "the stability and optimism of the Victorian age" and "a positive view of life"; he is anointed an "endearing personality" and "one of the most beloved poets and sages of our mid-twentieth century." A tart and bulky corrective to these adoring views arrived in 1966, with the first volume of Lawrance Thompson's two-thousand-page biography, which went to three volumes, the last composed by the dying author with the collaboration of R. H. Winnick. Thompson, a New Hampshire native born in 1906, first enters the picture as an organizer of a Frost exhibit at Wesleyan in 1936. Frost invited him to be his official biographer in 1939, the year Robert Newdick, who had been doing research and having conversations with the simultaneously wary and attention-seeking poet, unexpectedly died during an operation for appendicitis. Employed at the time as curator of rare books at Princeton, Thompson at first suggested Frost's friends Louis Untermeyer and Bernard De Voto as better candidates to do the job, but finally acceded; he was thirty-three and Frost sixty-five, and neither could have foreseen that more than twenty years of uncomfortably close association would go by before Frost died, in 1963. As Archibald MacLeish perceived, "Thompson saw too much of him—learned to dislike him very heartily."

The relations between Frost and his young biographer were further strained by Thompson's becoming, as we read in Jeffrey Meyers' 1996 "Robert Frost," Kathleen Morrison's lover. Meyers is the first biographer to tell us much about Morrison. Like Frost's mother, oddly, she came to this country from Scotland when she was eleven. She had been born in Nova Scotia, the daughter of a Scottish Episcopal clergyman who, after serving several parishes in Scotland, accepted a call from a fashionable Philadelphia church. She graduated from Bryn Mawr in 1921 and in 1927 married Theodore Morrison, a Harvard lecturer in English, whom she had met while both were working at the *Atlantic Monthly*. Though frequently described as cold, calm, and intensely conventional in outward deportment, Kay Morrison in her prime evidently maintained a male harem that included Frost, De Voto, her stoical husband, and—the newest member of Frost's court, and eight years younger than she—his official biographer. Thompson, who privately called Frost and Elinor "good examples of psychotics," foretold his animus in a 1964 introduction to Frost's letters, which he says reveal "periods of gloom, jealousies, obsessive resentments, sulking displays of temper, nervous rages, and vindictive retaliations." Thompson's introductions to the two biographical volumes he completed argue a kind of psychohistory of early wounds: Frost's disorderly and reckless father; his mother's humiliating failures at teaching school; Elinor's early rejec-



"It's no disgrace—somebody has to be plain vanilla."

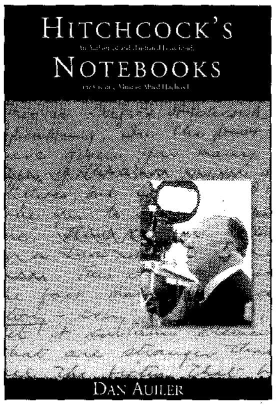
tions of her passionate suitor; and the flinty manner of William Frost, Sr., even as the old man, a Lawrence, Massachusetts, mill manager, generously helped support his son's and then his grandson's family. Frost reacted to these reality checks with shame, mendacity, and an exaltation of courageous will and the "form-giving" of poetry as "a means of defense against the threat of psychological chaos or insanity." Sampling Thompson's massive work after reading accounts of it, one is struck by its over-all judiciousness and sympathy as it seeks to understand Frost's less attractive traits in terms of his inner struggles. And, at the least, Thompson provides an unsurpassable wealth of detail and lets Frost, a pungent, uninhibited letter-writer and interview-giver, speak for himself through abundant quotations.

Nevertheless, Thompson's biography provoked a reaction, most notably Pritchard's "Robert Frost: A Literary Life Reconsidered" (1984), in which the author, after cross-examining the case that Thompson made, with great subtlety and good temper interrogates the work, making the best of the "playful, complicated, devious Frost" present in the poems. After all, the fact that Frost had a gloomy, fearful, and malicious side had been proclaimed by such critics as Lionel Trilling and often acknowledged by Frost himself: "I have been one acquainted with the night," one famous poem begins. John Walsh's book on Frost's English years, "Into My Own" (1988), quotes him as saying, "Evil clings so in all our acts that even when we not only mean but achieve our prettiest, bravest, noblest, best, we are often a scourge even to those we do not hate." And after Elinor's death he wrote to a friend, "God damn me when he gets around to it."

Jeffrey Meyers' biography, in counter-reaction, insists on the more sensational data. His second sentence lets us know that one American ancestor of Frost's "was banished from Kittery, Maine, for intimacy with an Indian girl and not allowed to return until he had married an English wife." Meyers outs the Morrison affair—both the Morrisons vetted the third Thompson volume, covering the years 1938-63, and suppressed any whisper of physical impropriety—and, though critics found

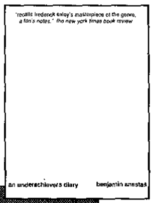
(Advt.)

In our world, there are the "doers," there are those who don't "do"...and there are those who write books about doing or not doing.

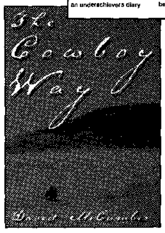

HITCHCOCK'S NOTEBOOKS
DAN AUILER

No one did it quite like Alfred Hitchcock, suspense film director extraordinaire. Exactly how he did it is the question—one that is addressed and answered by ***HITCHCOCK'S NOTEBOOKS***, a book that enables us to witness, step-by-step, the master's entire creative process. With the cooperation of the executors of the Hitchcock estate, author **Dan Auiler** gained unprecedented access to the director's journals, archives, and production notes for some of "Hitch's" most memorable films, including *North by Northwest* and *Strangers on a Train*. By combining these rare, never-before-published materials with detailed interviews with some of the writers and key production personnel, Auiler provides us with an in-depth look into the unique working methods and mindset of a cinematic genius, from film's conception through creation.

William, the young protagonist of **Benjamin Anastas**'s comic novel, ***AN UNDERACHIEVER'S DIARY***, would be content to spend his days doing absolutely nothing. The antithesis of his "perfect" identical twin brother, William has consciously dedicated his life to failure and mediocrity; and he has made the methodical pursuit of the third-ratedness in everything—from schools to jobs to lovers—a fine art. Anastas's very funny debut has been enthusiastically compared (by *The New York Times Book Review*) to Frederick Exley's classic *A Fan's Notes.*


"recalls frederick exley's masterpiece of the genre, a fan's notes." the new york times book review
an underachiever's diary benjamin anastas

Then there's **David McCumber**, who, like most boys who grew up in the western part of the U.S., used to fantasize about being a cowboy. But unlike most young dreamers, McCumber actually briefly became one—although he had to wait until after his forty-fourth birthday to do so. ***THE COWBOY WAY*** is the author's personal chronicle of the four seasons he spent as a hand on a large Montana ranch. His story is an adventure of the body, spirit, and senses; an honest, lyrical appreciation of a land, a lost profession, and an enduring American icon: the cowboy, then, now, and always.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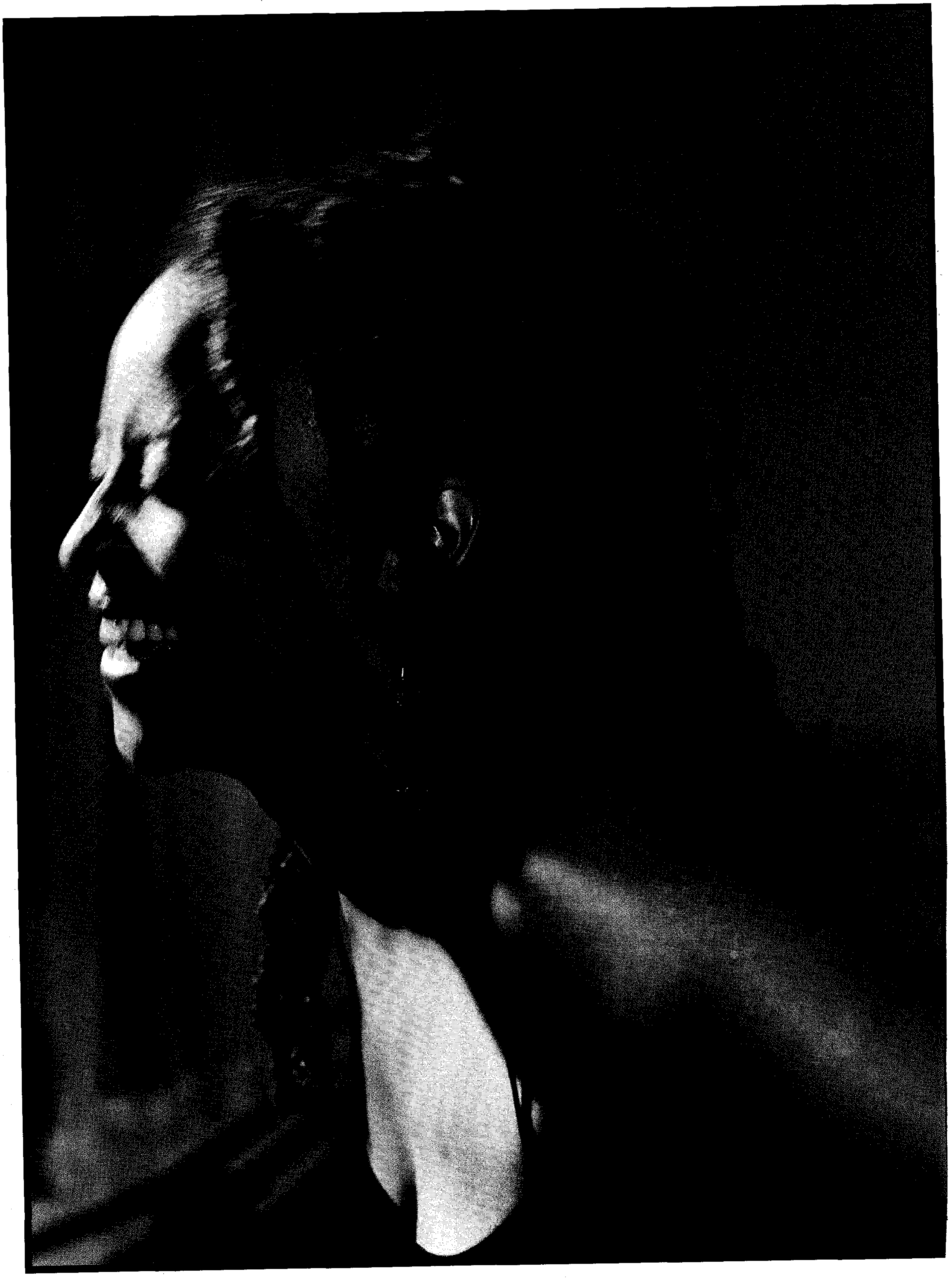


SHOWCASE BY MAX VADUKUL

GOOD NEWS

THE wonderful vocalist and composer Nancy Harrow recently had this to say about jazz singing: "The truth that can be told through a song is something that people are longing to hear, because it is not the kind of truth we talk about in ordinary conversation. But it is human and it is what we usually keep hidden—secrets, in other words. If the singer is truthful and honest, listeners will recognize themselves in those secrets and they will be moved." She could easily have been talking about Cassandra Wilson, whose singing is truthful and honest and full of secrets.

Wilson, who was born in Jackson, Mississippi, started out singing like Joni Mitchell, then moved on to Ella Fitzgerald, Sarah Vaughan, and Betty Carter. Her voice, high at first, sank, and she now has an insinuating, three-dimensional alto that seems to originate right inside the listener's head. She keeps her lyrics just below the surface—intelligible but sometimes delivered in parentheses. Betty Carter has been her master. Wilson, though, doesn't stretch tonal boundaries and juggle rhythms the way Carter did. She comes at you head on.

Most jazz singers pull their styles down over their heads and shut the door, but Wilson is a tireless experimenter who has taken on Robert Johnson blues and turned "Tea for Two" and the "Tennessee Waltz" inside out. Her new CD, "Traveling Miles" (Blue Note), is a kind of Miles Davis celebration that steps off from such Davis-associated numbers as "Someday My Prince Will Come," "Blue in Green," and Wayne Shorter's "E.S.P." (The elbowy backgrounds, played mostly by two guitars, piano, bass, and percussion, are full of vamps and ground basses and tireless six/eight rhythms.) The CD also includes Cyndi Lauper's "Time After Time," Marcus Miller's "Tutu," and several original songs by Wilson, who wrote the lyrics for the Davis extractions as well. To his "Run the VooDoo Down" she sings, "I got high john in my pocket / That mud on my shoes / Walked all the way from Mississippi / Just to spread the news." —WHITNEY BALLIETT

Meyers' readings of some poems crude and of some situations melodramatic, he lays down a thick and vivid barrage of brisk, persuasive assertions.

INTO this welter Jay Parini has dropped his "Robert Frost: A Life" (Henry Holt; $35). It is hard to see what it adds. Parini himself, in an afterword, provides a history of the biographies, upon which the above account draws, and he admits, "The reader must . . . wonder why another biography of Frost is necessary." For exegesis of the poetry, Pritchard's and a number of other closely argued volumes exist. On the life, Thompson and Meyers are more animated and concrete. Is it enough that Parini is very fond of Frost? His preface begins by claiming that Frost has been his "favorite poet ever since the ninth grade" and ends by calling the book, whose inception dates back to 1975, "a labor of love" that he was reluctant to complete. His intention, he says, was not "to supplant or overtake previous biographers and critics but merely to add a significant layer"—the significance inhering in a relatively few highlighted poems, discussed as "feat[s] of rescued sanity" in "the complex circumstances" of Frost's life. His tone places his work in the earlier, near-hagiographic tradition of Frost biography: "Each class brilliantly taught, each vivid public reading, each child comforted or cared for, each tender moment with his wife was accomplished by steadiness of vision and hard spiritual work."

A poet and fiction writer as well as a literary scholar, Parini strikes some nice phrases: Dutch elms were "long-necked, elegant trees," and of the revised poem "Fire and Ice" he writes, "Frost pulled it together, lacing the rhymes as tightly as a boot." His readings of the poems gravitate toward their religious implications: "As usual in Frost, the poem moves subtly beyond the physical circumstances of the poem, reaching toward a level that could be called metaphysical." Frost, loyal to both his parents, remained of two minds about religion. He remembered his mother's devoutness as "beautiful," and theistic issues frequently frame the inner debate of his poems and plays; musing on his poem "Kitty Hawk" at the Bread Loaf conference in 1959, he said, "The whole, the great enterprise of life, of the world, the great enterprise of our race, is our penetration into matter, deeper and deeper; carrying the spirit deeper into matter." On the other hand, he claimed no religious affiliation and in his last interview, before entering the hospital for the final time, he told the reporter:

> I don't take life very seriously. It's hard to get into this world and hard to get out of it. And what's in between doesn't make much sense. If that sounds pessimistic, let it stand.

Parini coins an apt phrase when he writes that Frost's poems "live on that perilous fault line between skepticism and faith." The peculiar standoff within Frost's ambivalent cosmos wins this poetic insight: "Frost's characters, literally and figuratively, seem endlessly forced to calculate the costs of movement."

But a certain blandness, even lameness, of style suggests that Parini wearied more than once during the long traverse across the wide scree of accumulated Frost data. His subject's complicated psyche receives injections of healthful simplicity: "He had come to England to make his name as a poet, and he would not give up until he had done so"; "With a quiet sense of triumph, Frost made his way northward." There is insufficient resistance, in a book about a poet, to the trite: "This is called having your cake and eating it, too"; "Like Dylan Thomas after him, Frost was prepared to 'rage against the dying of the light' "; "Deep inside, he would never get over it." As honors pile upon the aging hero, the acknowledgments become feebly dutiful: "Frost was profoundly moved by this gesture." And the concluding peroration goes into adjectival shock: "America had lost a poet of astounding grace and wisdom"; "The poetry itself is marked by an unbelievable, even visionary, clarity"; "Frost explored the theology of doubt with astounding honesty and passion"; "The contradictions of his life and work remain stunning." Amid such ineffectual homage, the dry, precise, low-pitched quotes from Frost ("My poems are all set to trip the reader head foremost into the boundless") sing.

Still, for those who are strangers to Frost's life and works, Parini is a benign guide, who never wanders far from the texts—so smoothly gnarled, so deftly deep—into rancorous psychologizing and gossip. He makes clear what a well-stocked mind Frost had, despite his fondness for playing the Yankee bumpkin. I. A. Richards, who knew him late in life, said that Frost "had an unusually theoretical mind, and liked to talk about language and meaning. . . . He knew vast stretches of English and American poetry by heart, and reached easily for examples in his conversation. I was always startled by his verbatim recall of poets from Shakespeare through Tennyson." To a degree matched only by Auden among major twentieth-century poets, Frost took clues from science—botany and astronomy principally. His knowledge of Greek and Latin probably surpassed that of Pound and Eliot, who flaunted their erudition more. He studied the classical languages at Lawrence High School (where he and Elinor had been co-valedictorians) and at Harvard (where he and Wallace Stevens were classmates, though neither graduated). The chiselled quatrains of his first collection, "A Boy's Will," suggest those of the professional Latinist A. E. Housman and testify to the curious connection between classical studies and a lean, honed English. Frost's general knowledge of history and philosophy enabled him to ramble winningly through commencement speeches like that at Oberlin in 1937.

Frost believed in the speaking voice—in yielding to his "voices"—and his theoretical bent led him to concoct his cherished theory of "the sound of sense," defined in the preface to his "Collected Poems" of 1939 as "the dramatic tones of meaning struck across the rigidity of a limited meter." This remarkably dense yet colloquial preface is one of the finest modern statements on poetry, with its parallel between the shape of love and "the figure a poem makes":

> It begins in delight, it inclines to the impulse, it assumes direction with the first line laid down, it runs a course of lucky events, and ends in a clarification of life—not necessarily a great clarification, such as sects and cults are founded on, but in a momentary stay against confusion.

The formulation is rephrased as the famous simile "Like a piece of ice on a hot stove the poem must ride on its own melting." We are reminded of the image, in his late poem "A Considerable Speck," of the tiny "living mite" he observes moving on a sheet of paper:

> No one can know how glad I am to find
> On any sheet the least display of mind.

He can be brilliantly open to digression—for example, the splendid seventeen lines in "Birches" describing the pliable trees after an ice storm, a self-interruption that he wraps up with

> But I was going to say when Truth broke in
> With all her matter-of-fact about the ice storm . . .

Poetry is discourse and process. "Poetry is the renewal of words forever and ever," he wrote Robert P. Tristram Coffin. "Poetry is that by which we live forever and ever unjaded. Poetry is that by which the world is never old."

MANY who never met Frost nevertheless gathered a personal impression. He was, as no less a successor bard than Allen Ginsberg put it, "relentless" in the number of public readings he gave. In Ginsberg's words, "He created an audience for poetry readings. . . . He was the first voyager, a kind of pioneer, the original entrepreneur of poetry." It would have taken an effort of avoidance to have been at Harvard in the early fifties and not to have heard Frost read; he lived over on Brewster Street for much of the academic year, though his relations with the university were informal. A reading that I (fallibly) remember was given in Sanders Theatre, that rather Elizabethan auditorium within the Victorian immensity of Memorial Hall. Frost shambled about on the stage as if he had been prodded from a sound winter's sleep; he "said"—as he put it—his poems rather rapidly, minimizing their music in his haste to get on with his spoken commentary on whatever came to his mind. In the front rows sat the flower of the English faculty, most conspicuously Archibald MacLeish, the Boylston Professor of Rhetoric and Oratory and our leading poet in residence. Compared to these exemplars of civilized letters, Frost was an untamed beast, a man who had wriggled or quarrelled his way out of every academic post he had had, though his appetite for instructing others was powerful. As a literary artist, he was, we all knew, the real thing, the one man in the hall—and, for that matter, in all of safe, sane Cambridge—who had staked his whole soul on poetry and had gained the prize, the prize as he had defined it when he wrote of Edwin Arlington Robinson, "The utmost of ambition is to lodge a few poems where they will be hard to get rid of."

Suddenly, abruptly, he shuffled a few steps to the edge of the stage, bent over, and attacked Archibald MacLeish, whose handsome big head—the head of a tall man, though MacLeish was not tall—happened to be in profile from my angle. MacLeish had recently issued a radio play, "The Trojan Horse," whose message in that heyday of McCarthyism was that the United States should not take into itself the Trojan horse of totalitarian tactics. Who could dispute so unexceptionable a message and the agitated liberalism that had given rise to it? Well, Frost could. "You know," he told his old friend and admirer in the astonished hearing of us worshipfully assembled undergraduates, "if you're going to beat a fella, you got to get to be like him." He may have said "sort of like him" or some such qualification, and I believe he continued awhile on this theme, long enough for its anti-anti-McCarthyist drift to register. It was Frost in action, cruelly playful, a cat reaching out from the stage to tease its mouse, an eminent mouse who had been faithful in the hospitality, cordiality, and homage he had granted, over the years, to the greater poet. Yet Frost, his biographies tell us, found MacLeish irritating, in both his shortcomings and his successes. Frost's version of the Job legend, "A Masque of Reason" (1945), had been panned by left-wing critics, whereas MacLeish's later "J.B." (1958) had been a Broadway success. Of "J.B." 's moral, which MacLeish's preface spelled out as "Our labor . . . is to learn through suffering to love," Frost had snorted, "People think everything is solved by love. Maybe just as many things are solved by hate."

And so on this occasion. As I remember it, Frost didn't raise his voice, and spoke as if helpfully, to an obtuse student. MacLeish smiled, slightly, through the assault; he knew his man, and perhaps had heard it all before. But we of the young audience had not, and this flash of bullying rather soured, for me, the charm of hearing "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening" and "The Gift Outright" in the voice of their maker. In long retrospect, I think there was something salutary in seeing a revered man break loose from our consensual politics and raise the possibility that life, between great powers and old friends, is combat, and not clean combat at that. The pugnacious refusal to let MacLeish's easy metaphor pass stemmed from the same independent, unaccountable, self-created, precariously maintained vigor ("There's a vigorous devil in me," he once wrote Untermeyer) that had lodged his best poems where they could not be got rid of. ♦

SARABAND

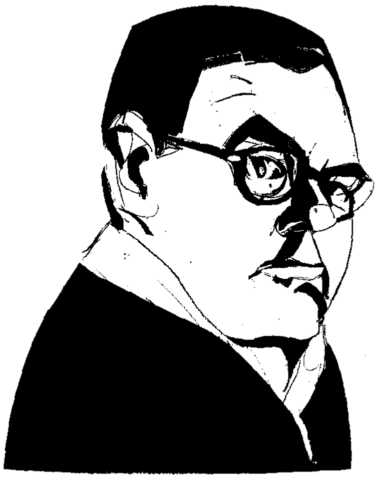
An old-fashioned pleasure.

BY DEBORAH GARRISON

In 1949, John Ashbery, then a senior at Harvard, was disappointed to learn that he was not the winner of the college's prestigious Garrison Prize for poetry. He had been bested, as the poet and critic David Lehman notes in the Ashbery chapter of his recent book on the New York school of poets, by a young man named Louis Edward Sissman. And the paths of the two poets, born half a year apart, diverged from there. L. E. Sissman, now all but forgotten, published only three books during his lifetime; his last, "Hello, Darkness," appeared in 1978, two years after he died, of Hodgkin's disease, in his late forties. Ashbery, now in his seventies, has become the preëminent poet of his generation, logging countless miles on the journey of his own poetic development and also on the larger odometer of the genre's shifting course. If his early work pointed toward poetry's future—toward the end of meaning as we knew it, toward the end, in a sense, of subject matter as distinct from the poet's process—Sissman's poems pointed toward its past, which is to say toward Auden (whom he cited as his foremost influence) and Yeats and Thomas Hardy, for whom subject matter was no incidental concern. It was not an avant-garde sensibility that announced itself when Sissman, in a poem that ran in these pages in 1967, described his student self returning home to the Midwest, in the full flush of Harvard immaturity:

> "En route aboard the Twentieth Century
> Limited," says the club-car notepaper.
> With a glad cry, I take a seat and write
> Six crested notes to six deserving friends
> Who need a lesson in my eminence,
> Or on whose female persons I have vain
> Designs. Speaking of female persons, who
> Is that old-fashioned girl three seats away,
> With maraschino-cherry lips and teeth
> As white as lemon pith, with ice-blue eyes
> And amber Bourbon hair? Must be Bryn
> Mawr.

No, he wasn't New York-school material; his work wasn't going to change the face of poetry, but it could perhaps be said to represent a Cambridge school of his own—a congenial, formally musical, eyebrows-raised poetics, suited to all occasions but not, finally, lightweight. Sissman approached everything—from the ordering of "Scotch and branch water" in front of Bryn Mawr (she wasn't impressed) to the matter of dressing for a biopsy ("and for my feet / Two paper slippers, mantis green: / My invitation to the dance")—with a collector's eye for detail, a jaunty perceptiveness that can swiftly turn dark, in the manner of Philip Larkin. ("Nowhere is all around us, pressureless," he begins one poem about the hospital, where "bare stretchers gape for commerce" and "in the air / Outside, a trembling, empty brightness falls.") "Going Home, 1945," which reviews the inevitable awkwardness with "the folks" and sees the young man safely eastbound again, is not included in "Night Music" (Mariner; $14), a gathering of Sissman's best work, perhaps because it's a touch sophomoric. (The contents have been selected by Peter Davison, Sissman's longtime editor.) But the overweening sophomore and the ailing middle-aged man were equal



L. E. Sissman

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BRIEFLY NOTED

November 1916: The Red Wheel/Knot II, by Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn; translated from the Russian by H. T. Willetts (Farrar, Straus & Giroux; $35). In an introductory note to his gigantic novel—the second in a proposed tetralogy—Solzhenitsyn announces that he has created this vast historical canvas in order to tell Russians the truth about their own past, which the Communists distorted. Since Americans interested in Russian history have been able to read a variety of sources representing an assortment of ideologies, little of the textbook material interpolated here comes as news to us. But when Solzhenitsyn relaxes his didactic labors his tremendous gifts as a novelist shine in his creation of characters and his depiction of war on the front line.

The Intuitionist, by Colson Whitehead (Anchor; $19.95). This unusual first novel follows the travails of the redoubtable Lila Mae Watson, the first black woman Elevator Inspector in a nameless city very much like New York. Caught between the political machinations of the two factions of the Elevator Guild (the Intuitionists, like Lila, inspect the elevators by a sort of sympathetic insight, whereas the Empiricists actually examine the cables and helical springs), Lila Mae finds herself in the midst of a murky underground war for control over the kingdom of Vertical Transport. Whitehead's prose is graceful and often lyrical, and his elevator underworld is a complex, lovingly realized creation.

Selected Letters of Vanessa Bell, edited by Regina Marler (Moyer Bell; $14.95 paper). "I have begun to write my biography. I don't think you will find me a rival to you, Billy. The literary style will be mixed and discursive." So wrote the painter Vanessa Bell to her sister, Virginia Stephen, in July, 1907. No such biography exists, but this engrossing, witty volume, full of Bloomsbury lore, is a vivid self-portrait of a working artist who had, to her way of thinking, equally pressing roles as mother, lover, sister, and friend: "I am meditating upon the extraordinariness of the world," she writes to Roger Fry in 1912, reflecting on the beginning of their relationship. "It does get odder and odder."

Martin Luther, by Richard Marius (Harvard; $35). Marius, a novelist and biographer of Thomas More, has wrestled mightily with Luther—almost as mightily as Luther wrestled with his God. This book, a serious, stimulating assessment of Luther's ecclesiastical significance, is a rare instance of a biographer's admitting defeat; Marius concedes that much work remains to be done concerning the last twenty years of Luther's life but that he will not be the scholar to do it. "Here I will beg off," he says without reluctance, worn out by Luther's eventual descent into inexhaustible vituperation. Nonetheless, this is a remarkable outline of the theological edifice Luther inhabited both before and after he sparked the Protestant Reformation.

parts of Sissman's persona from the publication, in 1968, of his first book, "Dying: An Introduction." He had learned in 1965, when he was only thirty-seven, that he had cancer, so it was under this mature yet frisky title—under the sponsorship of a speaker thrust too soon upon midlife and condemned—that readers met the young man on the train and watched him experience the juvenile comeuppance of getting kicked out of Harvard. "Work with your hands. / Stick with it two years. Maybe they'll take you back. . . . Now let's shake," advises a housemaster in a misbuttoned vest, who tells the student that he's "not soft on geniuses." The young man adds, "We shake. I shake in secret with the shame of it."

This seems about as far from dying as one can get, and so do most of the poems in the book, whose titles shimmer with inviting particulars—"The West Forties: Morning, Noon and Night," "The Nanny Boat, 1957," "Chamber Music, Bar Harbor, Off-Season." When mortality does tiptoe in, it is simultaneously embraced and dismissed with gentle vigor ("We turn our thirties over like a page," the final line of "Lovemaking; April; Middle Age" reads), in preparation for the level gaze of the five-part title poem. Part IV is the "Path. Report," which "Turns out to end in -oma." But in Part V, as the speaker leaves the hospital and notices "The molten, hissing stream / Of white car lights, cooling / To red and vanishing," and "the twos and threes of college girls, / Each shining in the dark / Each carrying / A book or books," he finds the November evening not chill and sombre but "as green as anything: As spring." Death, Sissman reminds us, can make life livelier, and as the poem bursts into bud the title "Dying: An Introduction" turns inside out: it refers not only to our end but to all that comes before it. He could just as well have called the book "Life: An Introduction," for in Sissman's vocabulary the two concepts converged and became one.

He was, as the housemaster surmised, a bit of a boy genius: born in Detroit in 1928, an only child, he became a Quiz Kid, and was the winner, at thirteen, of the National Spelling Bee. (The poet Edward Hirsch, in a foreword, describes Sissman's parents—one Jewish, one Gentile, both "ardent socialists"—as "remote.") He did graduate from Harvard, in the end, but he didn't write poetry during the fifties, his first adult (and adrift) decade. He bounced from New York back to Boston, working variously as a copy editor, a vacuum salesman, and a grunt on one of J.F.K.'s campaigns. He finally landed in advertising, thrived there, and became the creative director of Quinn & Johnson, a Boston firm. This career—not the nature of the work but the fact that he had an honest-to-goodness job—probably had as much influence on Sissman's approach to writing as his illness, which galvanized his return to the page. (In the introduction to "Hello, Darkness," Davison says, "For the rest of his life he wrote like one possessed of a knowledge remote from most of us, the knowledge of real time.") Though Sissman became a well-published poet, wrote regular columns for the *Atlantic Monthly* (these are collected under the title "Innocent Bystander"), and contributed more than forty book reviews to this magazine (he wrote about everyone from Kingsley Amis to Toni Morrison), he spent fifty-five hours a week in a suit and tie, far from the citadel of poetry. His sense of the bustling corridors of the broader world, the quickening step in nearly every line he writes, is the chief pleasure of his verse. He is not just poet and gray flannelite but social historian—a "lyrical anthropologist of his chosen milieu," as Hirsch describes him. In the fourth part of "The Village: The Seasons," the milieu is a West Village party given by one Gordon Walker, a fledgling trade-book editor, in July, when most of the neighborhood's residents have decamped to Fire Island, leaving behind the "residue":

The skeleton defense of skinny girls
Who tap the typewriters of summertime;
The pale male workers who know no time off
Because too recently employed; the old
Manhattan hands, in patched and gin-stained tweeds;
The writers (Walker's one), who see in their
City as desert an oasis of
Silence and time to execute their plots
Against the state of things, but fall a prey
To day succeeding day alone, and call
A party to restore themselves to all
The inside jokes of winter, in whose caul
People click, kiss like billiard balls, and fall,
Insensible, into odd pockets.

Sissman captures in countless ways

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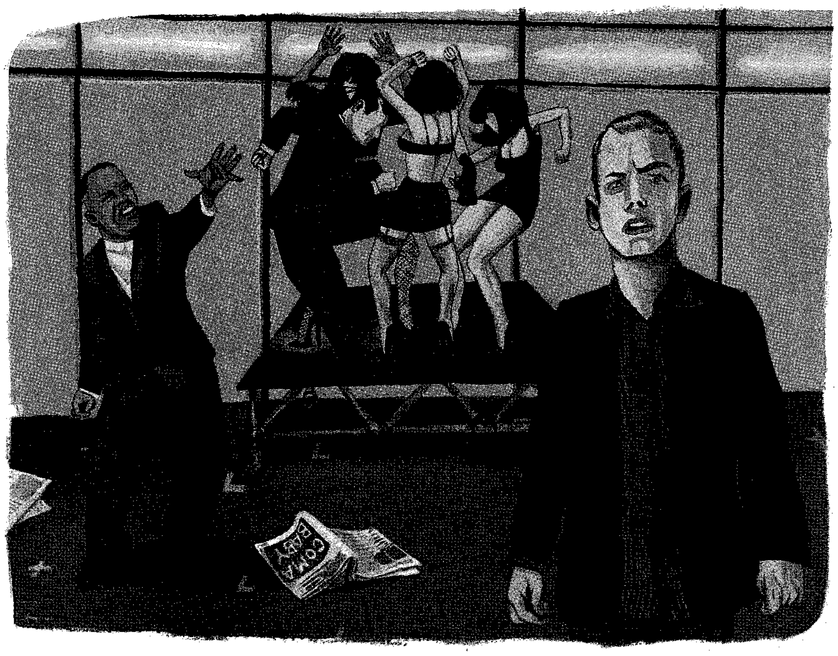
his “generation of the just- / Too-young-to serve,” and the growing pains of postwar culture: union sitdowns; the awkward conversation, when there is any, between the races; the passing away of a homey, ragtime style of metropolitan commerce and the burgeoning of what replaced it—a “new social contract of surreal / Withdrawal and avoidance,” which was embodied for Sissman in the mazelike interior of the Pan Am Building.

He was a paradox. For all his adman’s wizardry at taking the pulse of his times, Sissman was, with his fuddy-duddy blank-verse habit and his love of rhyme, literarily out of step with them. It must be this waywardness—his not being a party to any identifiable trend, not being an Ashbery or a Frank O’Hara, let alone a Beat—that has allowed his slim œuvre to slip back on the shelf behind cliques of books that are more easily categorizable. But he is worth reviving, and not purely as a curio. He was best at taking his own pulse—describing the fugitive joy of making a second marriage, or the curious terror of greeting his X-rays (“Hello, black skull. How privily you shine / In all my negatives”), or a bout of dramatic self-pity and rage, after which he writes, “Sheepish revenant, / I crept back into life as into much / Too large a pair of trousers.” Or, in “December 27, 1966,” the hope that persisted in his nature when, in the midst of a night sweat, he peered out the window at a purple sky:

The stars flash ornamentally with the
Pure come-on of a possibility
Of peace beyond all reason, of the spheres
Engaged in adagio saraband
Of perfect mathematic to set an
Example for the earthly, who abide
In vales of breakdown out of warranty,
The unrepairable complaint that rattles us
To death. Tonight, though, it is almost worth the price—
High stakes, and the veiled dealer vends bad cards—
To see the moon so silver going west
So ladily serene because so dead.

Without cancer—his enemy and, strangely, his inspirational partner—would Sissman have been merely a brilliant jingle writer or occasionally published charming versifier? He probably pondered this dancer-from-the-dance question more than once himself. But the answer doesn’t matter, since the poet, who wrote of his familiar brick-faced hospital, “Very few people know where they will die, / But I do,” used the knowledge well. ♦



THE THEATRE

MANHATTAN MELODRAMA

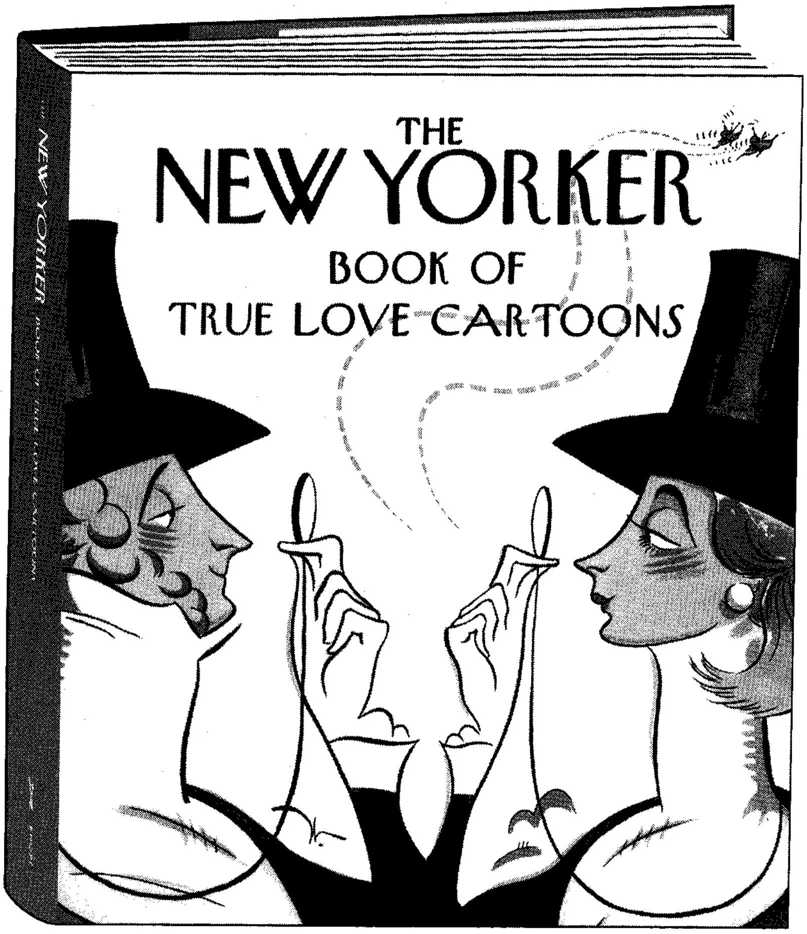
A new musical that wants to party like it’s 1984.

BY NANCY FRANKLIN

“BRIGHT LIGHTS BIG CITY,” a musical based on the autobiographical novel of *almost* the same name by Jay McInerney—his book has a comma in its title—seems unlikely to follow in the footsteps of “Rent,” which had the same director, Michael Greif, and originated at the same place, the New York Theatre Workshop. “Rent” rocketed to Broadway three years ago and is still in orbit; “Bright Lights Big City” ’s inherent design flaws will probably keep it from ever taking off. It is the brainchild of a Scottish songwriter named Paul Scott Goodman, who opens the show by walking onstage (wearing tartan-patterned shoes) and strumming his guitar. He tells us that he read the novel after he moved to this country, and that “it reminded me of me.” The world has had fifteen years to acquire some distance from the novel, and so has its author; in fact, if a musical needed to be made of it, McInerney might have been the man for the job. Unlike Goodman, who seems to have swallowed the book whole and then spat it back up, undigested, in musical form, the author might have brought some perspective, some irony to bear on the issues of failure and success, both personal and professional, that the novel is concerned with, and kept the show from being essentially a musical walking tour of New York from a dated guidebook.

Goodman’s irritating troubadourial presence aside (would that it were aside more often—he keeps thrusting his guitar into the action, and only too rarely retreats to the platform at the back of the stage where the band is stationed), he has done the book a couple of favors. In McInerney’s cri de coke, the unnamed twenty-four-year-old protagonist—called Jamie in the show—is about to lose his job as a fact checker at a well-known literary magazine, has lost his wife to her career (she’s a model) and another man, is preoccupied with visions of his unfulfilled promise as a writer, and spends his nights trawling the city’s clubs for drugs with his bad-boy friend Tad Allagash. He feels sorry for himself, which is understandable. He also feels that he’s better than everyone else, which is

What's funny about true love?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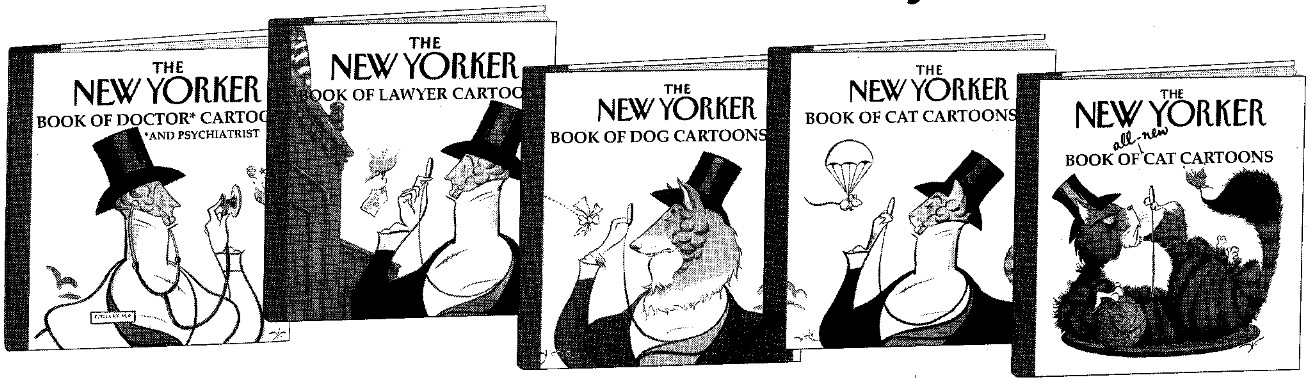
What else is funny?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not. Jamie has it both ways: he thinks of himself as an outsider, and he thinks of everyone else as a freak. It is, of course, no secret that the magazine in the novel is *The New Yorker,* where, in 1980, McInerney worked as a fact checker, and his just-this-side-of-libellous depictions of several staff members are based on not much: he was here for all of six months. (I worked in the magazine's typing pool then, but I knew him only by sight; if I were inclined to be McInerneyistically reductive about him, I would say that he wore white bucks. Fun fact: I got his job when he was fired.) Any talking-to we might have given Jamie about humanity—about the desirability of his addressing such traits as his misogyny, his homophobia, and his arrogance, for example—is silenced by the book's ending, in which we learn that Jamie's mother died of cancer a year earlier. This structure may replicate the process by which the author discovered his own feelings—one of the hallmarks of a breakdown is that it often doesn't reveal itself as such until after it has occurred—but to the reader the revelation comes across as a manipulative strategy for warding off criticism of both the protagonist and his creator. In Goodman's show, memories of Jamie's mother (AnnMarie Milazzo) appear earlier in the story, and the songs she sings to Jamie (Patrick Wilson) are sweet and tender, allowing the sadness that the novel doesn't let you feel to come through. She was his best girl, and his inspiration—in one scene, a flashback in which Jamie recalls his fifteenth birthday, she gives him her old typewriter as a present. Milazzo has one of the better, or better used, voices in the show; it's lovely and not perfect. It cracks a little at the high notes, which seems just right—who wants a diva for a mom? Goodman has also largely blurred McInerney's bratty renderings of Jamie's co-workers; the focus is on him, not on categorizing his fellow zoo creatures. In fact, Goodman, in the show's only instance of real wit, has got at the humor in Jamie's desperate work situation. He's checking a sloppily written piece about France, and his inability to tackle it gives rise to a song called "I Hate the French," in which the other fact checkers chime in. "I hate the French, I hate them all," he sings, "from Toulouse Lafucking Trec to Charles de Gaulle."

Over all, though, the show has a puppy-dog naïveté and clumsiness. The club crawlers' costumes look like what elementary-school kids would wear on "Eighties Day": they're correct to the letter, and they signify nothing. (Jamie, being a member of the master race—guys who have the Great American Novel in them—wears tasteful, simple, literary-guy clothes.) The musical is sung through, and there's something comically embarrassing about hearing people say things like "You got any blow?" in recitative. The songs, a mixture of hard rock and folky ballads, show no sign that the eighties actually happened. As for the lyrics—this seems like a good time to play the old-fogie card for all it's worth and say they don't make 'em like they used to. In "I Wanna Have Sex Tonight," a number set in the club the Tunnel, a bodybuilder sings to a "bimbette":

Oooh baby
You're so sweet
Can I pick you up
Can I lick you up
Can I stick you up.

A couple of minutes later, the bimbette asks the musical question "Can you make me come?"—and repeats it five times. (For luck?) "Bright Lights Big City" is both slack and mindlessly energetic—a worst-case scenario of undisciplined freedom of expression. The eighties were a nearsighted decade; who needs a nearsighted look back? At the very least, someone should have told Goodman, the happy host, to remove himself from the proceedings. But there he is, collaring us again at the end, after Jamie achieves some peace, love, and understanding and goes home to his apartment, "where," Goodman says, "we hear his typer being hyper once again as another day begins to groove in the heart of New York City." *Groove*? At this point, you wish you could say to Goodman and his show what the magazine *Time Out* said in its ads when launching its local version: "Welcome to New York. Now get out." ◆

THE CURRENT CINEMA

IN THE EYE OF THE BEHOLDER

Another look at Roberto Benigni's Holocaust fantasy.

BY DAVID DENBY

SOUND
SCENE
TAKE
1
2
3
PROD
Etc...

WILL comedy redeem the worst horrors of the century? Perhaps it already has: comedy that is utterly unafraid—comedy that enters into some sort of struggle, even complicity, with terror—can grow in strength and become terrifying itself. Kafka and Bruno Schulz worked at such an extreme of anguish and sweetness; so did Mahler in the scherzo of the Ninth Symphony and Godard in "Weekend" and Kurosawa in his bloody-funny samurai epics. A comedy that is set partly in a concentration camp is not, therefore, impossible to imagine. But in "Life Is Beautiful" Roberto Benigni caresses the foul buildings of the Nazi terror with the dulcet sound of Offenbach, and he creates for a little boy in the camp the fiction that the annihilating routines of the place are no more than an elaborate game that has been staged for his entertainment. Comedy and art, Benigni wants us to believe, not only keep the human spirit aloft but save lives. "Life Is Beautiful" is soothing and anodyne—a hopeful fable of redemption. It is also one of the most unconvincing and self-congratulatory movies ever made. When I saw it last October, the laughter died in my throat; I came out of the theatre feeling ash-gray, as if my soul had been mugged. I wrote out a full review for this magazine, but, with so many other movies opening, I decided to cut my pan to a mere three hundred words. At that length, the review raised more questions than it answered, and failed to engage the obvious enthusiasm that many people felt for the picture. "Life Is Beautiful" has won awards all over the world; it has been nominated for seven Oscars, including best picture, and has now

SKETCHBOOK BY ART SPIEGELMAN

"Be a Part of History and the Most Successful Foreign Film of All Time."
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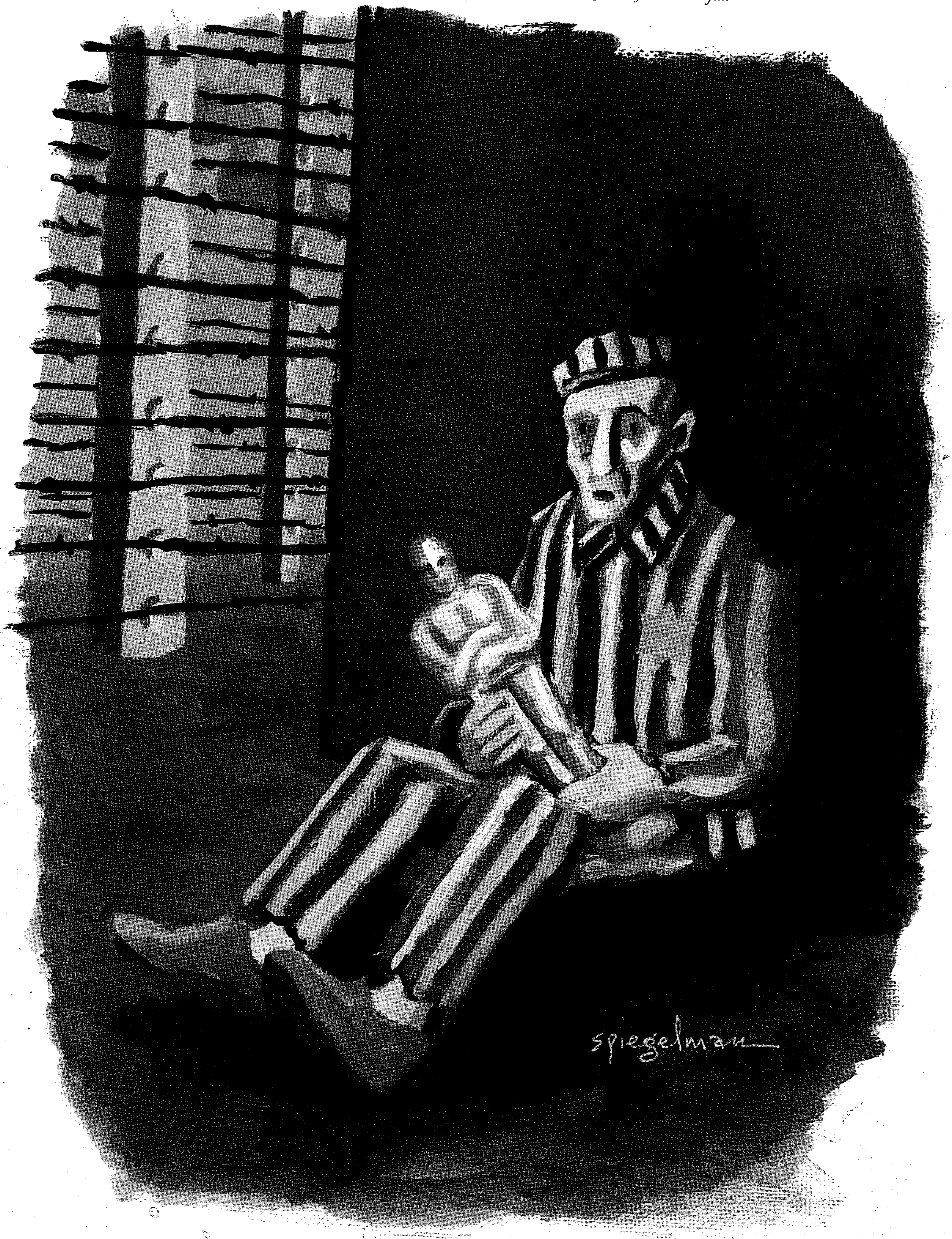

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earned more at the box-office than any foreign-language movie ever shown in America. I hasten to add that I am hardly the only person who was dismayed by "Life Is Beautiful." The reviews in this country were predominantly but by no means universally favorable, and I run into naysayers here and there. But I also keep hearing about people who think the movie is "wonderful." The picture appears to fill, for its many admirers, some sort of need. It's time to look at "Life Is Beautiful" again.

Roberto Benigni is a longtime star of Italian films, theatre, and television, but before "Life Is Beautiful" he was probably best known here for his performance as Bob, the voluble Italian who got stuck in a cell with two wordless American hipsters in Jim Jarmusch's "Down by Law." In that movie, as in all his movies, Benigni's unprepossessing looks served as the springboard for his triumph. His unkempt black hair, which juts out in different directions, tops a broad forehead, a fleshy nose, and a face that fades away to a bashfully recessive chin. As he opens his mouth wide, his big teeth form a donkey's grin, but at the same time something startling appears in his eyes—the light of victory. Benigni is a happy, noisy, virile clown, a man whose love of life cannot be discouraged. In such Italian comedies as "Johnny Stecchino" and "The Monster," he played an innocent dolt mistaken for (respectively) a Mafioso and a serial killer, and he overcame the suspicions against him by simply not noticing them. Benigni has the clown's gift of obliviousness. He defeats the world's malevolence in an explosion of *buffa:* he shouts and struts, sticks out his rump, hauls his eyebrows up and down, and waves his hands, shaping the air. When he directs himself, the pace and style of any given scene are set by whatever he wants to accomplish as a comic. Lost in his furious dream, he's the center of everything, and the filmmaking technique—what there is of it—shows him off. But if obliviousness is central to his art, surely it's fair to ask, Of what is he oblivious? What is the great clown triumphing over with his invincible humanity?

At first, in "Life Is Beautiful," he's triumphing over Italian Fascism. Benigni plays Guido, a bookseller and free spirit who roars into the small city of Arezzo in 1939. He is identified as a Jew, though there's nothing particularly Jewish about him. He's Everyman as harlequin, an instinctive anti-Fascist; he lays siege to a pretty schoolteacher, Dora (Nicoletta Braschi), snatching her away from her fiancé—a thick-bodied Fascist official—by carrying her off on a white horse. Like Jerry Lewis, Benigni is so obvious a comic that the obviousness is part of the joke. But even in this early, slapstick part of the movie Benigni shows his ambition. He has assembled the master craftsmen who worked with Fellini at different times—the production and costume designer Danilo Donati and the cinematographer Tonino Delli Colli—and they have provided him with enormous sets that are dressed white on white, in a de-luxe, wedding-cake style that suggests a satire of Fascist kitsch. Benigni doesn't really know how to use these enormous sets—he just performs in them, leaving vast amounts of empty space around him—but his idea is clear enough: Italian Fascism, with its fantasies of Roman imperial glory, was built on illusion; it was itself a form of buffoonery, and satire of it effectively diminishes it.

Nazism, however, cannot be so easily tamed by art. In the middle of the movie, the Italian Jews are rounded up, and Guido, Dora, and their little boy, Giosué, get sent to an extermination camp. The boy is a stubborn, happy child; Guido keeps the kid's spirits intact and his body alive by hiding him in his barracks and turning the life of the camp into a competitive game—telling him, for instance, that the people in the camp who disappear have been "eliminated" from the competition. Is playing make-believe inside a death camp possible? Does it make any sense, even as a fable? What Benigni is suggesting, no doubt, is that the Nazis have a fantasy of their own, a fantasy of total control, and that when they offer the inmates "showers" and give them "work" (hauling anvils) before putting them to death, they, too, are playing games. So Benigni and his co-screenwriter, Vincenzo Cerami, construct a counter-fantasy—a fantasy on behalf of life. It's a sweet, noble idea, but, really, it's no more than a conceit. As Hannah Arendt pointed out, the ends of totalitarianism in power may be insane—the premise, say, that all the Jews in the world should be murdered—but the methods used to bring these ends about are entirely rational. What the

Nazis did in the extermination camps, which operated on factory principles, was the height of functional rationality, and there's no way to devise a counter-fantasy without at least acknowledging this deadly efficiency.

Does Benigni come even close? The press kit for the movie speaks of research—archival photographs studied, survivors consulted, experts on life at Auschwitz invited onto the set for their advice, and so on. But the camp in the movie, constructed out of the remains of an old Italian factory, with its high walls and courtyard, looks nothing like Auschwitz or Treblinka. Benigni has said that he was creating a fable and wanted to avoid realism—but what, then, was the purpose of his "research"? Was he merely trying to convince himself that he was serious? Benigni wants the authority of the Holocaust but not the actuality of the Holocaust. Surely he knows that a young child entering Auschwitz would be immediately put to death, and that at every camp people were beaten and humiliated at random. He shows us nothing like that. The most frightening German we see (apart from the blond-bitch women attendants) is a brutal, apelike guard. When the guard barks instructions, Guido pretends to translate the words into Italian but actually uses the moment to tell Giosué the rules of the game. This is funny, but it's also embarrassingly trivial—a joke at the level of something from the old TV series "Hogan's Heroes." In the end, Benigni protects the audience as much as Guido protects his son; we are all treated like children.

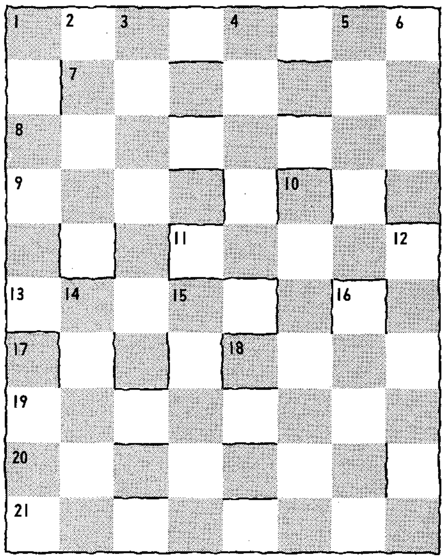
To make his movie work as art, Benigni, I think, would have had to take an enormous leap in style, into the surreal or hyperreal. He would have needed to be a much tougher man than he is. But Benigni's message, like Chaplin's, is love. He just loves that boy, and he desperately wants *us* to love *him*. Dear God, it is enough to make you weep. What good did love do anyone at Auschwitz? At one point, Benigni suggests that the boy is actually unillusioned about the camp, that the father is the one caught in fantasy—his own fantasy. An interesting idea: if the tough little boy had taken over and tried to protect Guido in *his* illusions, the movie might have achieved the power of a great, ironic fable. Benigni, however, has set up the story to make the father a hero, and the picture ends sentimentally, in a burst of self-sacrifice that celebrates Benigni the life-giving clown. But, as everyone who has studied the matter has said, the Nazis, in their thoroughness, made nobility irrelevant and self-sacrifice invisible. Benigni's myth is a senseless boast about the powers of comedy.

Even as proud an artist as Chaplin admitted that "The Great Dictator," his 1940 spoof of Hitler and Mussolini, was inadequate to its subject; and when Jerry Lewis, in 1972, made a comparable movie—"The Day the Clown Cried," which is about a German clown who entertains kids heading into the gas chambers at Dachau—he withdrew it rather than show it to the public. The enormous worldwide success of "Life Is Beautiful" suggests that the audience is exhausted by the Holocaust, that it is sick to death of the subject's unending ability to disturb. The audience's mood is understandable, but artists are supposed to be made of sterner stuff, and surely an artist cannot transcend what he never encounters. "Life Is Beautiful" is a benign form of Holocaust denial. The audience comes away feeling relieved and happy and rewards Benigni for allowing it, at last, to escape.

IN "200 Cigarettes," a somewhat less ambitious comedy, Paul Rudd, with sabrelike sideburns, and Courtney Love—large, blowsy, a pain in the neck but likable—play two people who have been friends for so long that they have lost the impulse to go to bed with each other. They love each other, but they can't get past a kind of nagging familiarity that makes a more exciting familiarity impossible. This relationship rings a bell; we've all had quarrelsome friendships like that. It's the truest and most interesting thing in a picture that wants to be nothing but a disposable date movie. "200 Cigarettes" is about young people trying to hook up with someone—anyone—on New Year's Eve, in 1981, in the East Village. Directed by Risa Bramon Garcia, it was not so much written and acted as *cast*. Just about every young actor is in it—Christina Ricci, Jay Mohr, an Affleck or two, Janeane Garofalo, Goldie Hawn's daughter—but most of them don't get to say or do anything very cool. Noisy, brightly lit, pleasant, and, except for Rudd and Love, entirely forgettable. ♦

8 x 10 CRYPTIC

NO. 80 BY FRASER SIMPSON



ACROSS

1 Support rain check (8)
7 Need about twenty-four sheets (7)
8 Discover unusual marital breakups (8)
9 Look, clothing line is announced (4)
11 Quick: length in imperial units (5)
13 Pull together a church service (5)
18 Snakes pass out (4)
19 Insults among peers? (8)
20 Run small R.V. (7)
21 Soften, as paints (8)

DOWN

1 Map area poorly erased (3,3)
2 Indians don't begin set of ballgames (5)
3 Divers always interrupting Mineo (7)
4 Country right north of Russian river (5)
5 Name of a woman included among their enemies (5)
6 One's unopened street hangout (4)
10 Hockey player Mark not as tidy (7)
12 Alberto's session features pitches (6)
14 Chop up candies for the audience (5)
15 Drop pair of slippers on baseball official (5)
16 Show a rope that's tangled (5)
17 Reportedly didn't see Niagara Falls feature (4)

• •

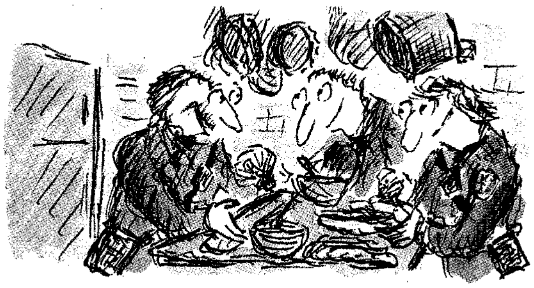
The solution to puzzle No. 79 appears on page 35. For a free copy of "The New Yorker's Guide to Solving Cryptic Crosswords," please send your fax number or a stamped, self-addressed envelope to "Solvers' Guide," The New Yorker, 20 West 43rd Street, New York, N.Y. 10036. For an electronic version, send an E-mail to puzzleguide@newyorker.com.

THE BACK PAGE BY EDWARD KOREN

A DAY WITH NEW YORK'S BRAVEST

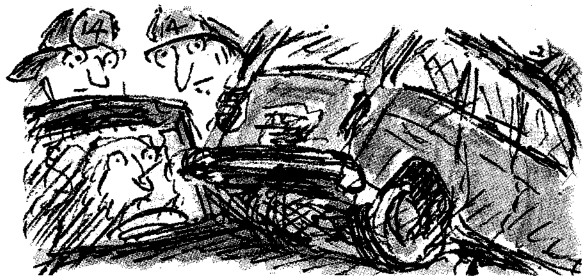
Two tours of duty with the eleven firefighters of Engine 35 and Ladder 14, along with the Battalion 12 Chief, at their firehouse in Harlem.

12:50 P.M. PREPARING LUNCH



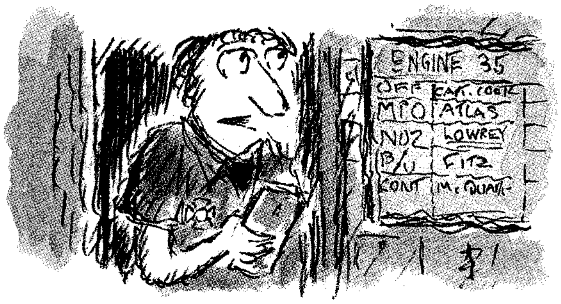
Steak subs and potatoes. "We had a good job last night—fire blowing out the windows of a brownstone when we pulled up."

1:55 P.M. AUTO ACCIDENT



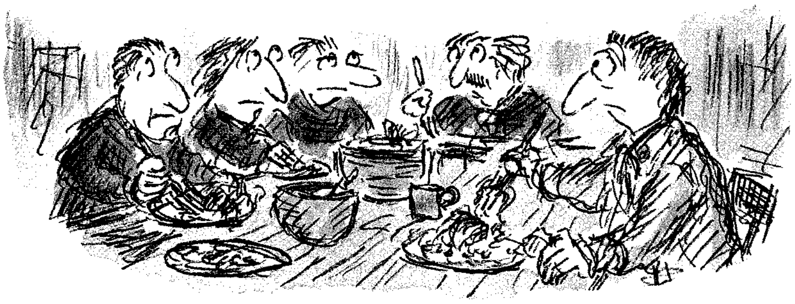
Engine, truck, and chief respond. "Now that we do E.M.S. runs, we pick up a lot of auto accidents, pedestrians hit—more than you'd think."

3:35 P.M. CALL TO ACTION



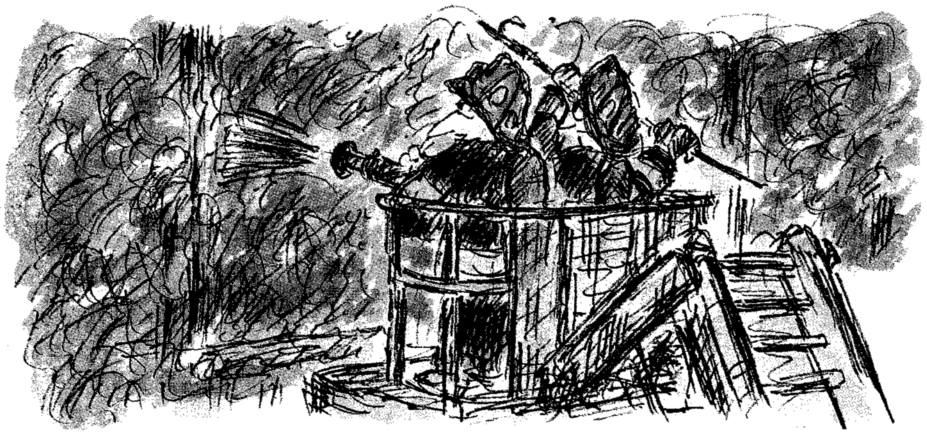
House watchman shouts, "Engine goes, truck goes, chief goes." Call to nursing home on West 106th. False alarm. Cancelled. Back at 3:42 P.M.

9:41 P.M. A STUDY IN FRUSTRATION

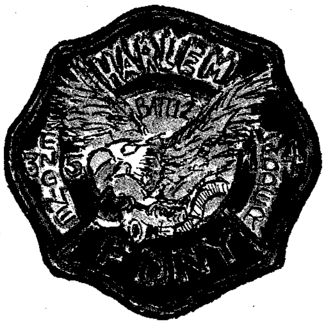


As the men sit down to a dinner of baked fish, forks literally poised over steaming plates, ladder and chief are called to a reported second-floor fire at 39 West 130th Street. There is no fire, only a heavy smell of burning food.

10:59 P.M. THE DAY'S GOOD JOB



Columbus Avenue at 105th Street. Engine, ladder, and chief go to heavy fire leaping from a five-story building, lighting the sky orange. Two men on the tower ladder help knock down the flames with a thousand gallons per minute.



By 2:30 A.M., the men are back at the firehouse, waiting for the next call and thinking about the next meal.

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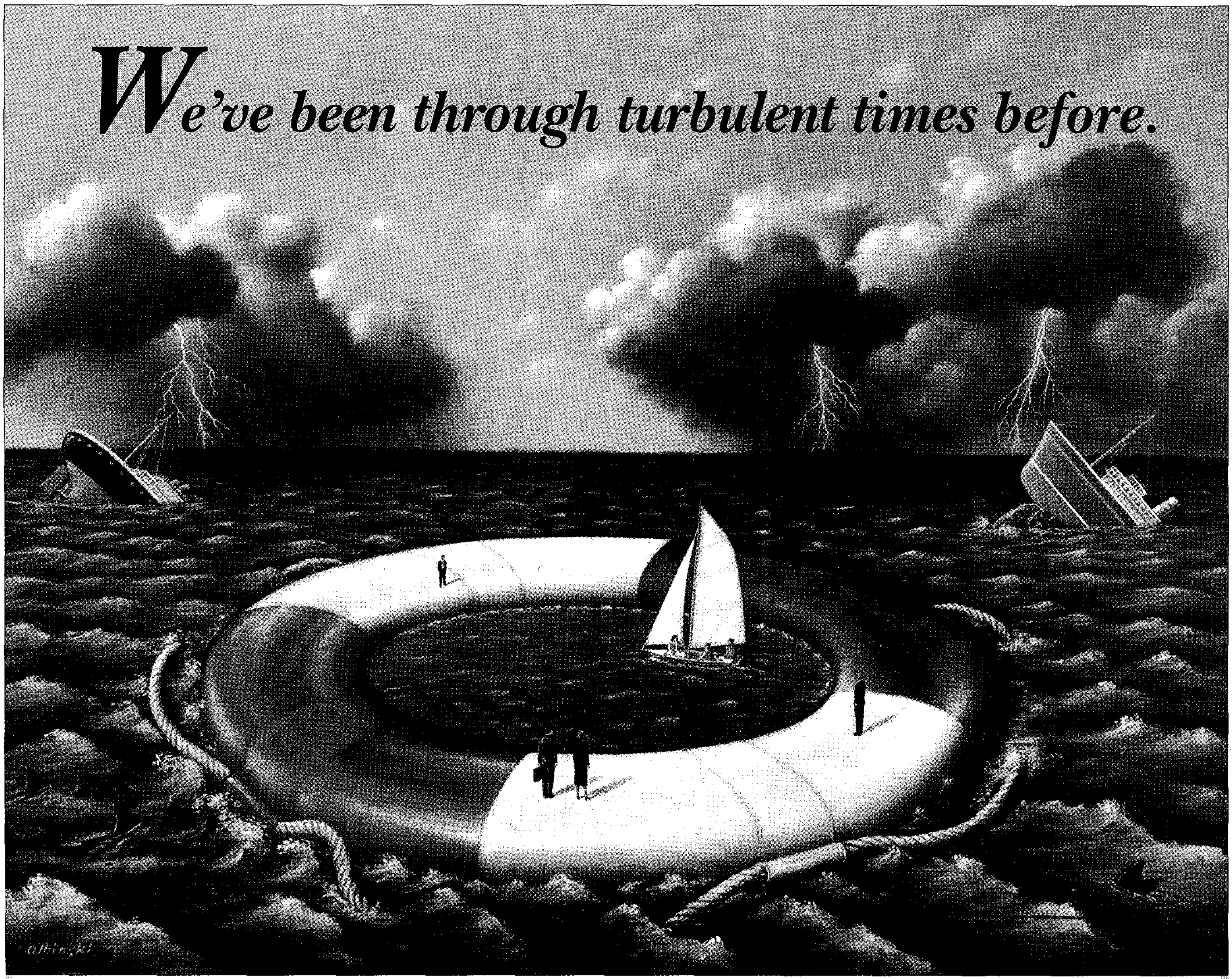
We've been through turbulent times before.

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